BOOK V

Fifth Centum—First Decad (V-1)
(Kai ār Cakkarattu)

Preamble

Through his brilliant exposition of the Lord's Supremacy, in the last decad, the Āḻvār could wean away the worldlings from propitiating the minor deities and turn their attention to the Supreme Lord (Viṣṇu). The Āḻvār is about to sing the song of benediction for the new state of affairs to flourish in all its glory, vide V-2. Meanwhile, he draws the searchlight inwards to examine the root-cause of the extraordinary grace showered on him by the Lord, whereby he could not merely stand apart from the worldlings without wallowing as one of them, but also advise and correct them. This introspection, however, reveals that even for a mere show of piety by him devoid of genuine love for God, He has condescended to open up the floodgates of His grace on him, without caring in the least to go beneath the skin and expose his hollowness. The Āḻvār just marvels at the Lord's overwhelming grace and gives vent to his wonderment, in this decad

kai ār cakkarattu eṉ karumāṇikkamē! eṉṟu eṉṟu,
poyyē kaimmai collī, puṟamē puṟamē āṭi,
meyyē peṟṟoḻintēṉ; viti vāykkiṉṟu kāppār ār?
aiyō! kaṇṇa-pirāṉ! aṟaiyō iṉip pōṉālē! (V–1–1)

Translation

Still engrossed with pleasures sensual, I did sham
Love unto you and called you out many a time,
As my Lord of sapphire hue, holding the discus majestic and so on,
And yet, you did your grace on this imposter rain
As if I am genuine; ha! who can its influx resist?
Oh, Kaṇṇapirāṉ, You can't from me part hence, even if you insist

Note

No doubt, the effulgent discus in the Lord's exquisite hand and His sapphire hue are very attractive and can easily steal

acharya.org

away the hearts of beholders. The Āḻvār's heart, hard like steel, is, however, impervious and yet he called out the Lord, not once, but several times, shamming the love of true devotees. Apart from this treachery of the tongue, the Āḻvār's behaviour, as he puts it, was also most unworthy of the Lord's grace. And yet, he now exults that he has been rewarded like the true devotees soaked in God-love, and exclaims that none can obstruct the influx of His voluntary grace, flowing with remarkable spontaniety. In this hour of victory the Āḻvār challenges, with a gusto, even the Lord to get parted from him, if He can! Did He not declare, as Śri Rāma, on the seashore, that He would not give up any one who sought refuge in Him, even if the supplicant be a foe in the disguise of a friend, an imposter? It is not as if the omniscient Lord has been duped into believing a pretender and taking him at his face value. The truth is that, though He is Omnipotent, He elects to be incapable of abandoning the sinner, when the latter seeks His protection, half-heartedly though, in view of the eternal bond of relationship subsisting between the Creator and the Creature. Perfectly safe under the wings of the Lord's mercy, the Āḻvār makes bold to declare that the Lord cannot tear Himself away from him.

pōṉāy mā marutiṉ naṭuvē! eṉ pollā maṇiyē!
tēṉē! iṉ-amutē! eṉṟu eṉṟē cila kūttuc colla,
tāṉēl, em perumāṉ avaṉ eṉ-āki oḻintāṉ;
vāṉē, mā nilamē, maṟṟum, muṟṟum eṉ uḷḷaṉavē. (V–1–2)

Translation

Shamming deep love, I called out the Lord
As the One who ' tween the twin trees crawled,
My honey, nectar grand, gem of the purest ray serene
And so on; lo! the Lord and His possessions have now become mine
And the cosmic duties He carries out from within me.

Note

The Divine child (Kṛṣṇa) was tied to a pounder by the Mother, as a punishment. But the child dragged it along and crawled

acharya.org

in between two 'Maruta' trees and felled them. The Mother grew apprehensive of the safety of the child and it was, therefore, quite all right when she questioned the young one anxiously, 'Ha! my darling, did you crawl between the trees?' But the Āḻvār repeats it now, as if he had even a fraction of the concern of the Mother. How pretentious! And yet, the Omniscient Lord has been pleased to take him at his face value and unto him repaired with all His retinue and got inside him. The Āḻvār wonders how this could be. (In him that is charged with God-love, the entire world of God stands illumined. This is now demonstrated.)

uḷḷaṉa maṟṟu uḷavā, puṟamē cila māyam colli,
vaḷḷal! maṉivaṇṇaṉē! eṉṟu eṉṟē uṉṉaiyum vañcikkum
kaḷḷa maṉam tavirntē, uṉṉaik kaṇṭukoṇṭu uyntoḷintēṉ
veḷḷattu aṇaikkiṭantāy! iṉi uṉṉai viṭṭu eṉ kolvaṉē? (V-1-3)

Translation

My Lord, resting on serpent-bed in the milk-ocean,
My mind was in other things steeped, but time and again
I tried to deceive you and uttered words insincere
Calling you out, oh, my Lord of sapphire hue, generous Sire,
And so on; with a mind by you redeemed and rendered pure,
You I now enjoy, I can't from you be apart any more.

Note

With a mind duly reconditioned by the Lord, purged of all its erstwhile grossness, dirt and delivery, the Āḻvār says, he cannot think of any but the most delectable Lord and there is no question of his giving up One who has such a strong hold on him and running after others who are hardly adorable and having nothing to grant, even if adored.

eṉ koḷvaṉ uṉṉai viṭṭu?—eṉṉum vācakaṅkaḷ colliyum,
vaṉ kaḷvaṉēṉ maṉattai valittu, kaṇṇa nīr karantu,
niṉkaṉ neruṅkavaittē, eṉatu āviyai nīkkakillēṉ;
eṉkaṉ maliṉam aṟuttu, eṉṉaik kūviaruḷāy, kaṇṇaṉē! (V-1-4)

acharya.org

Translation

Oh Kaṇṇā, I, a terrible thief, uttered words insincere
That I would think of none but you and now, may I implore
That you do forcibly reclaim my wayward mind with its woeful tears
And fix it on you besides ridding me of nescience dark
And lifting me up to you, away from the mesh intricate
(Of worldly life), whence my soul I am unable to extricate.

Note

There are two ways of appreciating the genesis of this song. The first is: " My Lord, You have no doubt redeemed my mind but I am still apprehensive of slipping back to my old ways, because of the impact of this material body and the mundane surroundings. I, therefore, pray that you be pleased to steer me clear of the material contacts and lift me up to your feet in Heaven ". The other elucidation is: In the preceding song, the Alvar declared that he had attained the Lord from whom he could not be separated any more. But that was only a mental appreciation while the Āḻvār longed for physical contact as well and actually held out his hand to clasp the Lord. The Lord could not be got hold of physically and the Āḻvār was quick to realise that it was not possible because of his material shackles. Hence, he prays unto the Lord to cut these out and make him stay at His feet for ever.

Terrible thief: The Āḻvār played the thief in two ways: While he was actually steeped in sensual pleasures, he addressed the Lord, professing great piety, that he thought of none but Him and things of that sort. Again, by holding himself as the Master of his soul which actually vested in the Lord, he had committed theft, a serious one, at that. The magnitude of a theft is determined by the value of the thing stolen and the rank and eminence of its owner. Seeing that the Jīva (Individual Soul) is the coveted possession of the Supreme Lord, the theft committed by the Āḻvār is terrible indeed.

It is indeed a very difficult task to wean the mind away from its escapades and ungodly pursuits and the Āḻvār has given it

acharya.org

up, as one much beyond his capacity. Only the Almighty Lord could do it and hence His intervention has been sought.

kaṇṇa-pirāṉai, viṉṉōr karumāṇikkattai, amutai,
naṉṉiyum naṉṉakillēṉ; naṭuvē ōr uṭampil iṭṭu,
tiṉṉam aḻuntak kaṭṭip pala ceyviṉai vaṉ kayiṟṟāl,
puṉṉai maṟaiya varintu, eṉṉaip pōra vaittāy, puṟamē. (V-1-5)

Translation

Oh, Kaṇṇā, I am near yet far from my nectar sweet,
The blue gem by Celestials adored, being put by you aside,
In a body by violent desires bound, neat outside
But full of dirt within and in blinding ignorance rendered weak.

Note

In this song, the Āḻvār expatiates on the heinous material contacts, referred to in the previous song. In the first two lines, he draws a picture of God-head, with melting tenderness, while, in the next two lines, he speaks of his own inglorious material shackles, with great abhorrence. Neatly cloaked outside, this body is but a bundle of guts and glands, blood and bones, nerves and muscles, dirt and delivery. But for the skin outside, it would become an easy prey to the greedy crows and man's whole occupation would then be to keep off the crows from pecking at the human flesh. This body stands as a big barrier between the Āḻvār and the Lord and therefore it is that the Āḻvār lustily pleads for its removal

puṟam aṟak kaṭṭikkoṇṭu, iru valviṉaiyār kumaikkum
muṟai muṟai yākkai pukal oḻiyak kaṇṭu koṇṭoḻintēṉ;
niṟam uṭai nāl taṭam tōḷ, ceyya vāy, ceyya tāmaraikkaṇ,
aṟam muyal āḻi aṅkaik karumēṉi ammāṉ-taṉṉaiyē. (V-1-6)

Translation

Seen have I my Sire of sapphire hue with shoulders four,
Broad and lovely, coral lips, lotus eyes red and hands comely,
Wielding the discus dutiful and thus cut out the entry

acharya.org

Into this body, of actions good and bad that seek to enter
By turns and get badly mixed up, hard to decipher.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār, who grieved over his serious handicap, the material shackles, in the two preceding songs, was compensated by the Lord, when He blessed him with the vision of His exquisite Form. In the resultant joy, the Āḻvār drowned his erstwhile miseries.

(ii) The so-called merit (Puṇya) and demerit (Pāpa) play havoc with this body, the seat of action, the one being as fettering as the other A golden fetter is a fetter all the same

(iii) The Āḻvār feels that the Lord is embracing him and His shoulders are thus mentioned first. Then He addresses sweet words and casts sweet glances and, in this very sequence, the Āḻvār refers to the Lord's coral lips and lotus eyes. The hands wielding the discus, a prominent member of the Lord's protection force, are mentioned next.

ammān āḻippirāṉavaṉ ev iṭattāṉ? yāṉ ār?
em mā pāviyarkkum viti vāykkiṉṟu vāykkum kaṇṭir;
kaimmā tuṉpu oḻittāy! eṉṟu kaitalaipūcaliṭṭē
meym māl āyoḻintēṉ: empirāṉum eṉ mēlāṉē. (V–1–7)

Translation

How great is the Lord wielding the discus
And how unworthy am I and yet, how gracious
That He, my Benefactor great, should His grace immense shed
Unto me, a sinner great! with joined palms overhead
I did, in hollowness address Him, as the one who rescued
The elephant in great distress and a devotee true
He has turned me, with love immense unto Him!

Notes

(i) One can't but shrink back while contrasting one's own abject lowliness with the Lord's peerless excellence. Reciting the first line of the original text of this song,

acharya.org

Piḷḷai-amutaṉar would exclaim: "How great and worthy He is, the Lord wielding the discus!" raising his arms up, pointing to heaven and then drop them down earthward, saying "how vile and unworthy I am!" And yet, when His grace descends and overflows its continents, this enormous disparity is more than made up. Then it is all one vast expanse of water (grace), where the high and low, big and small, cannot be differentiated. Śri Vedānta Deśika would appear to echo the substance of this song in Śloka 65 of his 'Dayā śatakaṁ', where he has observed that inundation of the Lord's grace has rendered one and all, big and low, quite even, all of them having been submerged under the vast expanse of His grace-people of low stature like Guha, the hunter chief, Sugrīva, the monkey King, a jungle inhabitant, named Śabari, kucela, the famished brahmin in rags, Kubjā, the malformed maid of Kamsa's establishment, the young Gopīs of Vraja, Mālākāra, the flower vendor etc., on the one hand, and Lord Śrīnivāsa Himself at that charming eminence, known as Tiruvēṅkatam, on the other.

(ii) The Lord's grace becomes all the more lustrous and pronounced, when it embraces even fakes like the Āḻvār (as he puts it). He just feigned devotion and referred to the Lord's rescue of Gajendra in distress, though not with the intense feeling of a true devotee whose heart can't but melt down at the Lord's post-haste arrival in the pond which was the scene of a titanic struggle between the elephant and a crocodile. The Lord pounced upon the Āḻvār even as a famished fellow pounces upon food.

mēlāt tēvarkaḷum nilat tēvarum mēvit toḷum
mālār vantu, iṉanāḷ aṭiyēṉ maṉattē maṉṉiṉār;
cēl ēy kaṇṇiyarum, perum celvamum, naṉmakkaḷum,
mēlāt tāy tantaiyum avarē iṉi āvārē. (V-1-8)

Translation

The Lord, by the exalted Celestials and Brahmins revered
And adored, now in my heart lovingly inheres;

acharya.org

He is from now on, All-in-one unto me,
The fish-eyed damsels, riches big, adorable parents and sweet progeny.

Note

The Lord, lovingly worshipped by vast multitudes in Heaven and the pious brahmins on Earth, has condescended to exhibit even greater love unto the Āḻvār than to them all. What is more, He has got right inside the Āḻvār. Little wonder then that the Āḻvār looks upon the Lord as the aggregate of all happiness derived by the earthlings through various sources, Father, Mother, Wife and all these.

āvār ār tuṇai? eṉṟu alai nīrk kaṭaluḷ aḻuntum
nāvāy pōl piṟavikkaṭaluḷ niṉṟu, nāṉ tuḷaṅka,
tēvu ār kōlattoṭum tiruc cakkaram caṅkiṉoṭum,
āā! eṉṟu aruḷceytu, aṭiyēṉoṭum āṉāṉē. (V–1–9)

Translation

Like unto a ship sinking in the surging ocean,
With none going to its rescue, I was struggling hard
In the ocean of worldly life when the resplendent Lord,
Wielding Conch and Discus and bursting with compassion,
Shed unto me His grace and in me joined, in a state of fusion.

Note

The Āḻvār gratefully acknowledges the supreme grace of the Lord in dispelling all his erstwhile miseries by exhibiting His exquisite charm and entering his person, making His union with him just as natural and perfect as His holding the glorious weapons-Conch and Discus.

āṉāṉ āḻuṭaiyāṉ eṉṟu aktē koṇṭu, ukantu vantu,
tāṉē iṉ-aruḷceytu, eṉṉai muṟṟavum tān āṉāṉ;
miṉ āy, āmaiyum āy, naraciṅkamum āy, kuṟaḷ āy,
kāṉ ār eṉamum āy, kaṟki ām iṉṉam-kār vaṇṇaṉē, (V–1–10)

Translation

That the cloud-hued Lord has me His vassal made
I gratefully uttered and He has His grace on me shed

acharya.org

Most lovingly and unto me become everything delicious;
He is the One who did incarnate as Fish, Wild Boar, Tortoise,
Man-Lion and Midget and will, as Kalki, appear in due course.

Note

The age-long efforts of the Lord, an indefatigable cultivator, to redeem and reclaim the Āḻvār, have, at long last, yielded results. The Āḻvār who is now God-bent, gratefully acknowledges the Lord's herculean efforts. And this simple gesture of the Āḻvār has drawn the Lord inside him, where He lovingly stays, firm and fast. This is, however, nothing new for the Lord who spared no pains in the process of sustentation and incarnated in various forms. Even as the clouds go on unleashing the rains, the cloud-hued Lord will not stop with the many incarnations already made by Him; He will also incarnate as Kalki hereafter. Looking at all the past incarnations of the Lord as those solely directed towards the Āḻvār's reclamation, His future Avatāra as 'Kalki' would seem to be superfluous but it is not so, being intended as a safeguard or corrective against the possible future pit-falls, as long as the Āḻvār remains in this abode.

kār vaṇṇaṉ, kaṇṇa-pirāṉ, kamalattaṭaṅkaṇṇaṉ-taṉṉai
ēr vaḷa oṉ kaḷaṉik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
cīr vaṇṇam oṉ-tamiḻkaḷ ivai āyirattuḷ ip pattum
ārvaṇṇattāl uraippār aṭikkīḻp pukuvār polintē. (V-1-11)

Translation

Those that lovingly recite these songs ten,
Out of the perfect thousand Tamiḻ songs, composed by Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, with fertile fields where many a plough plies,
Adoring Kaṇṇaṉ, the cloud-hued Lord with lotus eyes,
Will remain pious unto Him and His feet attain.

Note

Those that recite these ten songs with intense love, as if they are drinking nectar, will remain pious Śrī Vaiṣṇavas during their stay here, and attain the Lord's feet, like unto children reposing on the mother's lap.

acharya.org

Fifth Centum—Second Decad (V-2)
(Polika Polika)

Preamble

In IV-10, the Āḻvār preached to the world at large the Supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu, in convincing style and thereby weaned the people from propitiating minor deities. The resultant upsurge of devotion to the Supreme Lord converted this abode into a land of bliss, hardly distinguishable from Heaven. This again resulted in a free flow of visitors from Heaven and other upper regions to this land, to behold and admire this new state of affairs. A golden era having thus been ushered in, the Āḻvār hails it in this decad. He also envisaged, with a prophetic vision, the happy preservation and propagation of God-love thus generated, in the coming ages as well, through the advent of the illustrious Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Saint Rāmānujācārya, the veritable destroyers of the evil forces of Kaliyuga.

polika! polika! polika! pōyiṟṟu val uyirc cāpam; [illai;
naliyum narakamum nainta; namaṉukku iṅku yātu oṉṟum
kaliyum keṭum; kaṇṭukoṉmiṉ; kaṭalvaṇṇaṉ pūtaṅkaḷ maṉmēl
malıyap pukuntu, icai pāṭi, āti, uḷitarak kaṇṭōm. (V–2–1)

Translation

Hail! hail! hail! the state of affairs new!
Gone are the sins heavy, the hells with miseries strewn
Have been destroyed; no work here for Yama's hordes
And Kali too will soon be destroyed, please note.
Seen everywhere are the devotees of the sea-hued Lord,
Singing sweet songs in His praise, all over the land.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār says, "May this state of affairs flourish!" thrice over, after the Vedic pattern of "Śāntiḥ, Śāntiḥ, Santiḥ".

(ii) All sins, however, deadly, having been destroyed, there is no question of the Subjects going to hell and hence, there is no work for Yama, so far as the denizens of this abode are concerned.

acharya.org

(iii) Even Kali Puruṣa will soon become defunct-this was the prophesy of no less than Saint Nammāḻvār, blessed by the Supreme Lord with far-sighted knowledge, envisioning the future advent of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Śri Rāmānuja. The expression, " Please note ", carries with it an aura of certainty, the sure fulfilment of this prophesy. This is further reinforced by saying that the entire land is filled with devotees, singing the Lord's praise, leaving no room whatsoever for Yama and his hordes or Kali and his agents to step in and play their pranks.

kaṇṭōm, kaṇṭōm, kaṇṭōm; kaṇṇukku iṉiyaṉa kaṇṭōm;
toṇṭir! ellirum vārīr; toḻutu toḻutu niṉṟu Ārttum;
vaṇṭu ār taṇ am tuḻāyāṉ mātavaṉ pūtaṅkaḷ maṉmēl
paṉ-tāṉ pāṭi niṉṟu, āṭi, parantu tirikiṉṟaṉavē. (V–2–2)

Translation

Seen, seen, seen we have indeed, sights feasting the eyes!
Devotees of Mātavaṉ, donning tuḻaci garlands, cool and nice,
Studded with honey, are ambling about all over the place,
Singing songs tuneful and dancing merrily; Come, one and all,
Ye, pious men, revere them we shall and revel to our heart's fill.

Note

In the exuberance of his joy, the Āḻvār beckons like-minded devotees to come and enjoy this grand gathering of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. This is in dire contrast to the unsightly world from which he wanted to be removed earlier (IV-9). The eyes prove their real worth, only when they behold such pious gatherings.

tiriyum kaliyukam niṅki, tēvarkaḷ tāmum pukuntu,
periya kitayukam paṟṟi, pēriṉpa veḷḷam peruka,
kariya mukilvaṇṇaṉ, emmāṉ, kaṭalvaṇṇaṉ pūtaṅkaḷ maṉmēl
iriyap pukuntu, icai pāṭi, eṅkum iṭam koṇṭaṉavē. (V–2–3)

Translation

Kaliyukam, with its morals topsy-turvy, is gone
And the golden Kitayukam, with morals sound, is back again;

acharya.org

The Devas too have come close to devotees, in ecstasy bound,
Singing with great eclat, filling the space all round,
The glory of the Lord of oceanic hue, like unto water-laden cloud.

Notes

(i) Packed with Śrī Vaiṣṇavas Lord Viṣṇu's devotees all over, this land now easily attracts even the exalted Nitya Sūrīs from the High Heavens. Earlier, as we saw in IV-9, this was a forbidden land of dirt and delivery.

(ii) The trend of Kali yuga, that is, toppling down all moral values, has been forecast in ' Mokṣa Dharma ' of Mahā-Bhārata. And yet, Saint Nammāḻvār, born as early as on the 43rd day after the advent of Kaliyuga, could, ironically enough, turnout to be the destroyer of Kali, almost at its very inception.

(iii) The Heaven is reputed to be the land of perfect bliss and beatitude while this Earth used to be just the reverse. But what is the position now? The Earth is now inundated with bliss, ever in spate, throwing into shade even the Heaven.

(iv) The Śrī Vaiṣṇavas aie now thronging all over, like the inhabitants of Ayodhya who went to Citrakūt to meet Śrī Rāma, singing all the way, " When are we going to have darsan of our cloud-hued Rāma, with valiant shoulders, firm and steadfast, the destroyer of the sorrows of the Universe? "

iṭam koḷ camayattai ellām eṭuttuk kaḷaivaṇa pōlē,
taṭam kaṭal-paḷḷip perumāṇ taṇṇuṭaip pūtaṅkaḷē āy,
kiṭantum, iruntum, eḻuntum, kītam palapala pāṭi,
naṭantum, paṟantum, kuṇittum, nāṭakam ceykiṉṟaṇavē.
(V–2–4)

Translation

This land is full of ardent devotees of the Lord,
Reposing on the milk-ocean; lying, sitting and standing,
Walking along, singing many a song and dancing,

acharya.org

Flying about with heels above the ground, they are revelling
Like those out to uproot the heretical religions rampant in the world.

Notes

(i) It is a matter of common knowledge that unwanted things easily multiply themselves at random and can be had in plenty dirt-cheap while life-saving herbs are very rare, needing such herculean effort to get at them, as Hanumān undertook to secure the life-giver, in the story of Rāmāyaṇa, uprooting the mount as a whole. Even so, the heretical religions grow up like mushrooms on a rainy day, while the Vedic religions are few, and so their propagation is limited. But now, the Āḻvār is most agreeably surprised to find the land seething with Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, bubbling with God-love. These God-lovers do not have to make any effort, as such, to root out the heresies. The latter will automatically vanish like the blade of grass when the paddy is harvested or the light introduced into a dark room, clearing the darkness as a matter-of-course.

(ii) As the devotees are entitled to even greater reverence than the Lord Himself, the Āḻvār enjoys the different postures of the devotees in their ravishing moments of God-love, even as he mentions the Lord's postures of sitting, standing and lying, quite often

ceykiṉṟatu eṉ kaṇṇukku oṉṟē okkiṉṟatu-iv ulakattu
vaikuntan pūtaṅkaḷē āy, māyattiṉāl eṅkum maṉṉi;
aiyam oṉṟu illai; arakkar acurar piṟantīr uḷḷīrēl,
uyyum vakai illai, toṇṭīr! ūḻi peyarttiṭum koṉṟē. (V–2–5)

Translation

I see this land with the Lord's devotees full
And they act in many ways; the ungodly and devilish
Among you, worldlings, have no means of survival;
They will just finish you off and the world replenish
With the golden age ,there is hardly any doubt about this.

acharya.org

Note

To the Āḻvar's eyes, it is all one vast concourse of Śri Vaiṣṇavas, including the ' Nityas ' and ' Muktas ' from Heaven, gathered here, there and everywhere. No doubt, Heaven is the Eternal Land whence there is no returning to this abode. There is, however, no bar for the denizens of Heaven moving out, at their volition, as distinguished from forcible expulsion. In this pious gathering, there is absolutely no place for the ungodly and the devilish, who will fare no better than Suka and Śāraṇa, the two spies from Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā, who smuggled themselves into Śrī Rāma's camp.

The Lord's devotees will not merely vanquish these quislings but also redeem the ' yuga ' itself and usher in the Golden age (Kṛta yuga).

koṉṟu uyir uṇṇum vicāti, pakai, paci, tīyaṉa ellām
niṉṟu iv ulakil kaṭivāṉ, nēmip pirāṉ-tamar pōntār;
naṉṟu icai pāṭiyum, tuḷḷi āṭiyum, ñālam parantār;
ceṉṟu toḻutu, uymmiṉ; toṇṭir!-cintaiyaic cennṟuttiyē. (V–2–6)

Translation

Devotees of the Lord wielding the discus have come here
And spread themselves out, singing and strutting about,
To banish from this abode pestilence, hunger and hate,
Evils, one and all; Ye, worldlings! let not your minds wander,
Better fix them on morals sound and revere, with a mind pure,
These devotees and at their feet salvation secure.

Note

The Lord's devotees are here in this abode to quell all evils, just as His discus does. The Āḻvār exhorts the worldlings to get themselves salved through this holy band. A pre-condition for worship is concentration of the mind and this is being stressed here. Again, purity of worship consists in seeking nothing in return, worship being an end in itself.

acharya.org

niṟutti num uḷḷattuk koḷḷum teyvaṅkaḷ ummai uyyakkoḷ
maṟuttum avaṉōṭē kaṇṭir; mārkkaṇṭēyaṉum kariyē;
kaṟutta maṉam oṉṟum vēṇṭā; kaṇṇaṉ allāl, teyvam illai;
iṟuppatu ellām avaṉ mūrtti-yāyavarkkē iṟumiṉē. (V–2–7)

Translation

The deities whom you in your minds forcibly lodge
And worship, help you only thro' the Supreme Lord
Whom they revere; Sour you needn't feel when I say
There's no God but Kaṇṇaṉ and all homage you pay
To other deities goes but to Him, as they His bodies are;
Well, Mārkkaṇṭēyaṉ will unto this witness bear.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvar was mighty glad that this land was full of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas but suddenly, he happened to notice a few non-vaiṣṇavas too, here and there These were not only not attached to the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas but were immersed in the propitiation of the Godlings (minor deities). And so, the Āḻvār wished to bring them also round through advice. He tells them. "If you think you should persevere in your present method of worshipping the minor deities and propitiating them, you may, by-all-means, do so, but with the knowledge that there is but one God, namely, by Lord Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) and all the other deities are but His bodies as stated in the upaniṣad. All the homage, that you pay unto your deities, actually reaches Him, as they are but His bodies. Already, you have blackened your faces by worshipping the lesser gods but now I find your minds also turning black, as you are evidently not happy with what I say. But then, I am telling you the barest truth. Mārkaṇṭēya whom you have all known as a staunch devotee of Śiva, will bear me out"

(ii) Very pleased with Mārkaṇṭēya's penances and deep devotion, Śiva told the supplicant:

" Mārkaṇṭeya, you have waited on me so long. I will now recommend you to our Sovereign Lord Nārāyaṇā whom

acharya.org

I myself wait upon, to hold my present position. The Supreme Lord will then requite you for all your services unto me. In doing this, I only follow the rules of hospitality which demand that if a guest happens to come, the host must offer food. If, however the host has no food, he has to guide the hungry guest to a good neighbour's house where he is sure to be fed; otherwise, the host will sin ". Vide also notes under IV-10-8.

iṟukkum iṟai iṟuttu, uṇṇa, ev ulakukkum taṉ mūrtti
niṟuttiṉāṉ teyvaṅkaḷ āka; at teyva nāyakaṉ-tāṉē;
maṟut tiru mārvaṉavaṉ-taṉ pūtaṅkaḷ kītaṅkaḷ paṭi,
veṟuppu iṉṟi, ñālattu mikkār; mēvit toḻutu, uymmiṉ nirē.
(V–2–8)

Translation

' Tis the Supreme Lord who has set up in different climes
The minor deities appropriate, to receive the homage the votaries pay them
And grant them boons; the devotees of the Lord with (*Śrī-vatsa*) the mole
On His winsome chest, singing songs of His glory, flourish well
In this abode; better revere them and in their footsteps follow.

Note

The Emperors of yore used to receive the tributes payable to them through the subordinate officials and, in the present day, Government dues are collected through a vast network of agencies. The Scriptures likewise prescribe the rites and rituals to be offered to the various deities who are but the agents of the Supreme Lord, rather, His bodies through which He carries out His enormous functions. The Āḻvār says that those who propitiate the minor deities can as well emulate the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, who are spread all over this land and strightaway worship the Supreme Lord, the Sovereign Master to whom the minor deities owe allegiance.

acharya.org

mēvit toḻutu, uymmiṉ nīrkaḷ; vētap puṉita irukkai
nāvil koṇṭu, accutaṉ-taṉṉai ñāṉaviti piḻaiyāmē,
pūvil pukaiyum viḷakkum cāntamum nīrum malintu,
mēvit toḻum aṭiyārum pakavarum mikkatu ulakē. (V–2–9)

Translation

Here we have those that with devotion great serve the Lord
With flowers and incense, chanting the Vedic mantras sacred
And those immersed in deep contemplation of His traits auspicious;
Revere them all lovingly, ye, worldlings, and redeem yourselves.

Notes

(i) The two types of devotees, referred to here, correspond to Lakṣmaṇa who followed Śri Rāma into exile and served Him in all ways, and Bharata who was stationed at Nandigrām, in devout contemplation of Śrī Rāma.

(ii) ' *Devotion great*: This refers to the discipline of Bhakti mārga taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

mikka ulakukaḷ tōṟum mēvi, kaṉṉaṉ tirumūrtti
nakka pirānōṭu ayaṉum intiraṉum mutalākat
tokka amarar kuḻāṅkaḷ eṅkum parantaṇa; toṇṭīr!
okkat toḻa kiṟṟirākil, kaliyukam oṉṟum illaiyē. (V–2–10)

Translation

Ye, worldlings, the deities whom you do adore,
Nakkapirāṉ (Śiva) Ayaṉ (Brahmā), Intiraṉ and all others
Worship, in strength, the Lord Supreme of form exquisite and thrive well,
In their sprawling worlds; like these celestials you will also do well
To worship Him and thus Kali's mischief quell.

Note

Here is the certain recipe for counteracting the trend of Kaliyuga, which detracts men into worshipping the minor deities, instead of adoring the supreme Lord.

acharya.org

kaliyukam oṉṟum iṉṟikkē taṉ aṭiyārkku aruḷceyyum
maliyum cuṭar oḷi mūrtti, māyap pirāṉ, kaṇṇaṉ-taṉṉai,
kali vayal teṉ naṉ kurukūrk kārimāṟaṉ, caṭakōpaṉ
oli pukaḻ āyirattu ip pattu uḷḷattai mācu aṟukkumē. (V–2–11)

Translation

The hearts of those that recite these songs ten,
Out of the glorious thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṉ,
Of lovely Kurukūr in the south, with many a field fertile,
Adoring the wondrous Kaṇṇaṉ of resplendent Form that does dispel
Kali's influence unwholesome, will be rid of blemishes, one and all.

Note

This Tiruvāymoḷi will cleanse the minds of its chanters thoroughly and fix them, firm and fast, on to the Supreme Lord, to the exclusion of everything else, such as the adoration of other deities and selfish desires, the blemishes referred to in this end-song Constant meditation on the Supreme Lord is characteristic of Kṛta yuga while such a thing is conspicuous by its complete absence in Kaliyuga. Thus the change of mind wrought by this decad changes the character of the Yuga too, replacing Kali by Kṛta yuga

Fifth Centum—Third Decad (V-3)
(Mācu aṟu Cōti)

Preamble

The Āḻvār now reverts to the state that obtained in IV-8 and is all agog to get united with the Lord. Non-fulfilment of his intense longing, however, induces him to contemplate the drastic step of coming into the open and carrying his tale of woe to the public at large so that the unresponsive Lord could be arraigned at the bar of public opinion and the union with Him got accelerated. It might be recalled that Śrī Rāma who had invoked the King of the oceans, got furious, when the latter didn't turn up, and bade Lakṣmaṇa to bring unto Him the bow, so that the entire ocean could be dried up

acharya.org

for the monkey battalions to walk through to the other shore. The frustrated Āḷvār is also likewise poised to negative God-head altogether, if the union longed for, so intensely, by him cannot materialise, there and then.

It can now be easily inferred that the Āḷvār is once again in the 'Nāyakī' state, that is, the forlorn female lover, weighed down by the intensity of God-love, unable to brook separation from her Beloved, any longer. In Tamil literature, there is what is called the 'maṭal', the episode of the hero going a-hunting and casually meeting the heroine who happens to be alone, having got accidentally separated from her maids when they were all playing about, picking up flowers etc. The hero and the heroine exchange erotic glances and part. The heroine whose heart has been stolen away by the hero, draws a sketch of him and keeps on gazing at it, days on end; she languishes without food, does not tend her person, scratches her body with the teeth of a palmyrah stem and runs about with dishevelled hair, bitterly complaining to the on-lookers that she has been badly let down by a heartless fellow and things of that sort. Moved by the piteous condition of the forlorn lady, the people would intervene to hasten the union of the hero and the heroine or the hero himself would rush in, terrified by the slander heaped on his head, and take the lady. The third alternative would, of course, be for the lady to seek relief through death (suicide). The underlying sentiment is thus ardent love, egging the desperate lover on, to a public declaration of such love, sometimes culminating in the tragic act of self-immolation. 'Tolkāppiyam', the ancient Tamil work, seems to confine this to the males only, the mad lovers riding to death, through the Streets, on the toothed edge of a palmyrah stem, as if on a horse. But, in the North, females were also permitted to have recourse to 'maṭal' (e.g.) Sītā, Vegavati, Vāsavadattāi, Umā, Uṣā, Ulūpikā etc.

The Āḷvār's contemplated move is indeed extraordinary, the more so when he is in the vanguard of 'Prapannas' who are not to invoke any means other than God Himself and put to the imperative necessity of catering to His sole delight. Nevertheless, it cannot be criticised as improper; it is the exuberance of such love-intoxicated super-personalities that made them overshoot their mark. The Āḷvārs were no doubt endowed with supreme knowledge by the Lord Himself and they could, therefore, be expected to be above

acharya.org

criticism. But their knowledge was not the dry-as-dust stock but one transformed into intellectual love of God. In the exuberance of such love they were thrown into a state of mental imbalance (Bhakti pāravaśya) and acts performed in such a state are indeed praiseworthy and, surely, these are not comparable with the transgressions committed by the common people due to immaturity and ignorance in a relatively unevolved state, still under the grip of nescience. The Āḻvār's mental attitude is but an inevitable facet of God-love, seeking quick consummation by the Lord. It is worth contrasting the Nāyakī's present stance with that in IV-8. Whereas she was then prepared to abjure herself and her possessions if they could not be engaged in the Lord's service, she is now out to destroy Him and His cosmic wealth if He would not make Himself pliable to her. The mate could no longer keep the Nāyakī under sobering restraint and the latter was determined to destroy God-head even at the cost of her own destruction. The Lord could no longer afford to be a passive witness to this state of affairs and, therefore, He presented Himself to the Nāyakī and thus redeemed her and Himself.

mācu aṟu cōti eṉ ceyya vāy maṇikkuṉṟattai,
ācu aṟu cīlaṉai, āti mūrttiyai, nāṭiyē
pācaṟavu eyti, aṟivu iḻantu, eṉai nāḻaiyam?
ēcu aṟum ūravar kavvai tōḻī! eṉ ceyyumē? (V-3-1)

Translation

You know, my mate, my awareness is lost
And my lustre gone since long, in quest
Of the primordial Lord of splendour unalloyed and coral lips,
The mount of emerald, of loving condescension with no lapse;
How then will the rebuke of slanderous folks affect me?

Notes

(1) The mates of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, who had prior knowledge of her contemplated move, dissuaded her, in a low whisper, from going ahead with it, lest the people around should reproach her for her aggressive stance. The Nāyakī was, however, not in the least worried about public opinion; as a matter of fact,

acharya.org

she had become impervious to it long back. The Nāyakī stood on a pedestal of her own and the magnitude of her privation from God, of Supreme eminence, was not comparable with any known to the common man of the world. Hence her reactions were also bound to differ widely from those of the worldlings in regard to their individual privations.

(ii) The Āḻvār was no doubt endowed by the Lord with knowledge, full and complete. But, intoxicated by God-love, the Nāyakī had long ago lost her mental equipoise; else, would she fall at the feet of bees and birds and beg of them to carry her message to God?

eṉ ceyyum ūravar kavvai, tōḻī! iṉi nammai?
eṉ ceyya tāmaraik kaṇṇaṉ eṉṉai niṟai koṇṭāṉ;
muṉ ceyya māmai iḷantu, mēṉi melivu eytī,
eṉ ceyya vāyum karuṅ kaṇṇum payappu ūrntavē. (V–3–2)

Translation

My Lord with red-lotus eyes robbed me of my modesty,
With my complexion gone, my body is thinning down,
The hue of my red lips and eyes black is also going down
What indeed is the reproof of these folks unto me?

Note

Queried by her mates as to how she could afford to ignore public opinion and be indifferent to it, the Nāyakī says that she is well past that stage, having lost all sense of awareness of the world long ago, when the Supreme Lord of exquisite charm stole away her heart. Pining for Him, she has thinned down alarmingly and is terribly off-colour. When she recounts these disquieting changes, it is not by way of stating her own loss; these were the things which had once attracted the Lord and the loss is, therefore, His and not hers.

ūrnta cakaṭam utaitta pātattaṉ, pēymulai
cārntu cuvaitta cevvāyaṉ, eṉṉai niṟai koṇṭāṉ;
pērntum peyarntum avaṉōṭu aṉṟi ōr col ilēṉ:
tīrnta eṉ tōḻī! eṉ ceyyum ūravar kavvaiyē? (V–3–3)

acharya.org

Translation

My seasoned mate, now and again, I keep talking of none
But the coral-lipped Lord who sucked the life out of the demon
And unto pieces kicked the devilish wheel; He robbed me
Of my traits feminine and now what is it to me,
The rebuke of these slanderous folks around?

Note

Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī enlightens her mate by saying that the Lord kicked the demon who entered the cart-wheel, to a thousand pieces, and sucked the demoness who feigned as the good mother, unto death, only to attract her and steal her heart away. It was earlier assumed by the mate that these incidents formed part of the general scheme of annihilation of the Lord's enemies set upon Him by Kamsa.

The Nāyakī feels tortured and tormented, due to her separation from the Lord. The mate whose role it is to put the Nāyakī on to her beloved, now questions the Nāyakī's wisdom in being soaked in God-love despite her pangs of separation from the Lord and suggests that she might as well turn her attention on other things and get over her misery. But the Nāyakī asserts that her thoughts are always rivetted to Him and consequently, her conversation has to necessarily revolve round Him. This gladdens the heart of the mate, quite in keeping with her true role and she hugs the Nāyaki to her bosom, in appreciation of the Nāyakī's steadfast love to God. It is against this background that the Nāyakī addresses her mate as the seasoned one. This is like Sītā's appreciation of Hanumān, after her initial doubts about his bonafides were dispelled.

ūravar kavvai eru iṭṭu, aṉṉai col nīr paṭuttu,
īra nel vitti, muḷaitta neñcap peruñ ceyyuḷ
pēr amar kātal kaṭal puraiya viḷaivitta
kār amar mēṉi nam kaṇṇaṉ, tōḻī! kaṭiyaṉē. (V–3–4)

Translation

Kaṇṇaṉ, my cloud-hued Lord, has indeed done me so much;
The rebukes of the folks around He made the manure rich,

acharya.org

My mother's sobering counsel, the channel of irrigation
And sowed He the seed of devotion that raised the crop rich,
Of God-love, in the spacious field of my heart, big as the ocean;
Could such a one, my mate, be dubbed cruel devoid of compassion!

Notes

(i) *Mate to the Nayakī* "I don't mind your being indifferent to public opinion, if the Lord were at least with you, but now, you are neither here nor there. Why not give up the Lord who seems to treat you as of no consequence? ".

Nāyakī to the Mate : " Is it you speaking like this? How can I at all blame the Lord Who has kindled in me the undying flame of love? Smitten I am, no doubt, by the reproof of these folks, on one side and the poignance of my separation from the Lord on the other. But, don't you see that my mind dwells not on any but Him, under all circumstances? "

(ii) This song indicates the manner in which God-love of such magnitude was generated in the Nāyakī. The earthlings tried to nip her God-love right in the bud but their admonitions only intensified her love and thus proved a blessing in disguise. The constant attention of her mother and her wholesome counsel tended and nurtured this God-love in the Nāyakī, like unto a steady flow of water irrigating the fields. Having created such a fertile background, the Lord, as an indefatigable cultivator, sowed the seed of devotion in the Nayakī's heart and there sprouted the rich crop of God-love, sustained further by the vision of His exquisite Form, like unto the rain-cloud. The precise manner in which the Lord reclaims the sense-buried Soul and eventually takes it on to His exalted abode has been admirably set out in aphorism 104 of Ācārya Hṛdayam.

acharya.org

kaṭiyaṉ, koṭiyaṉ, neṭiya māl, ulakam koṇṭa
aṭiyaṉ, aṟivu-aru mēṉi māyattaṉ; ākilum,
koṭiya eṉ neñcam avaṉ eṉṟē kiṭakkum; ellē!
tuṭi koḷ iṭai maṭat tōḷī! aṉṉai eṉ ceyyumē? (V–3–5)

Translation

Agile and alert or cruelly indifferent could be the Lord,
Big beyond comprehension, His feet measured the worlds,
His form bewitching puts one in a daze and yet
My stubborn mind clings to Him alone, my thin-waisted, modest mate!
How can mother over me prevail [if you can't] ?

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī reinforces her stand vis-a-vis the Lord, as set out in the preceding song, by stating that she would adore the Lord even if He were to be a callous despot, bereft of good qualities, and that it was, therefore, no use trying to draw her away from the Lord. Be it a matter of recounting the auspicious traits of the Lord or of cataloguing His oppressive methods and tactics as listed in this song, the Nāyakī was indeed far more competent than the mate. This is because it is the Nāyakī and not the mate who has alternately tasted the bliss of union with the Lord and suffered the pangs of separation from Him.

(ii) If it suited His purpose, He could do a thing with the utmost speed and pounce upon the Subject, lulling the latter into a sense of false security that the union would last for ever; He would also not hesitate to leave the Subject in great distress by snapping Himself suddenly. Bent upon getting back the Kingdom lost by Indra, the Lord would leave no space for Bali and send him to the depths of the underworld. Knowing these oppressive tactics of the Lord as well as she did, the Nāyakī would nevertheless cling fast to Him. Drawbacks though these might be, still they are His drawbacks and the Lord's contact with them is enough to make the Nāyakī feel attracted to them. The emphasis is on the Lord's

acharya.org

contact, as such and not the nature or quality of the contact c.f. aphorisms 108 to 110 of 'Śrī Vacana Bhūṣaṇa'. Were it not disinterested love of God, love for its own sake, as distinguished from love induced by the Lord's auspicious traits, there should be an end of such love during those moments when the devotee feels frustrated and thinks that God is bereft of all those endearing qualities, he pined for. The Lord might be anything, selfish, time-serving, elusive and so on, but He shall be the sole refuge of the Āḻvār, under all circumstances. In Periya Tirumoḻi, XI-8-7 Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār also picturesquely brings home the inalienability of the 'Master-Servant' relationship between God and Man, whatever be the vicissitudes. Addressing the Lord, he says: "My Lord! you are generally known to be sweet as sugar-cane; even if you turn bitter like the margosa fruit, I, Your eternal servant, will covet nothing else but Your comely feet, like unto the caterpillar, bred on margosa leaf, eating nothing but that."

(iii) It is worth recalling, in this context what transpired between Anasūya Devi, wife of Sage Atri, and Sītā. Felicitating Sītā on her fidelity to her husband (giving up the palace and all its wealth and relatives and following Śrī Rāma into exile) Anasūya Devi exhorted that the husband needs to be venerated as God Himself, be he in town or wood, well or ill. Swayed by modesty, the bashful Sītā stood with down-cast eyes and spoke out: "It is indeed difficult for one to prove that my fidelity to Rāma stands by itself without any external provocations or inducements, as Rāma and his excellence can never remain apart. My fidelity will remain constant even if he were the exact reverse of what he is".

aṉṉai eṉ ceyyil eṉ? ūr eṉ collil eṉ? tōimīr!
eṉṉai iṉi umakku ācai illai; akappaṭṭēṉ-
muṉṉai amarar mutalvaṉ, vaṉ tuvarāpati
maṉṉaṉ, maṉivaṉṉaṉ, vācutēvaṉ valaiyuḷē. (V–3–6)

acharya.org

Translation

It matters not, my mate, what the mother says
Or the folks around, leave me alone, will you?
Ensnared am I by Vācutēvan of sapphire hue
Prince of Tuvārakai, the city beautiful, chief of ' *Nityas* '.

Notes

(i) *Nityas*–the 'Nitya Sūrīs' or the Eternal Heroes, the ever-free angels in heaven.

(ii) Finding the Nāyakī implacable, her mates tried to impress upon her that, by her conduct, she would only imperil the life of her mother and it would be a terrible loss, all round—the Lord hasn't come to her, her mother would die and the folks around would heap abuses on her. But the Nāyakī tells them that, entranced as she is by the bewitching looks of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Prince of Dvārakā, all the above considerations would be of no avail and that they would do well not to pin their hopes on her any more. Actually, she has lost alike her vision and heart unto her Lord.

valaiyuḷ akappaṭuttu, eṉṉai nal neñcam kūvikkoṇṭu,
alai kaṭal-paḷḷi ammāṉai, āḻippirāṉ-taṉṉai,
kalai koḷ akal alkul-tōḷī! nam kaṉkaḷāl kaṇṭu,
talaiyil vaṇaṅkavum ām kolō, taiyalār muṉṉē? (V–3–7)

Translation

My lovely mate, well-clad, shall we with our eyes behold
The Lord who ensnared me and away with my good heart fled
And rested on the surging ocean, the Benefactor, who the discus wields
And bow unto Him, well in front of these (rebuking) ladies?

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī longs for the Lord's presence so as to enable her to fall at His feet, right in front of the slanderous folks and silence them. These folks were slandering the Lord as faithless to the Nāyakī and the latter as foolishly sticking on to Him.

acharya.org

(ii) When Kūrathaḻvāṉ discoursed on this song in a place called Rājēntracōḻaṉ, a centenarian got up, shaking from head to foot and reverently queried whether it would be appropriate for the Nāyakī to bow unto her lover. The illustrious discourser quoted Sītā's conduct in this regard as the precedent. She told Hanumān when he took leave of her in Aśokavana at Laṅkā; " Pray, tell Śrī Rāma, corn to protect the entire world, that I prostrate unto Him". Sundara Kāṇḍa XXXVIII 53.

The Sandals got separated from Rāma and went north. Sītā was separated from Him, later on, and she went south. Whereas the sandals, installed on the throne ruled over a whole Kingdom, Sītā was a miserable captive in Laṅkā, tormented and tortured by the seven hundred and odd Rākṣasīs Sītā must have pondered within herself and realised that this disparity was due to the contact of the Sandals with Śrī Rāma's feet and the absence of such contact, in her case Therefore it is that she now tells Hanumān, the Ācārya, that she prostrates at the feet of her Lord, albeit from that distance.

pēy mulai uṇṭu, cakatam pāyntu, marutu itai
pōy mutal cāyttu, pul vāy piḷantu, kaliṟu aṭṭa,
tū muṟuval-toṇṭaivaip pirāṉai en nālkolō
yām uṟukiṉṟatu, tōḷī! aṉṉaiyar nāṇavē? (V-3-8)

Translation

When shall we attain, my mate, the coral-lipped Lord,
Of smiles pure, who the demon's breast sucked, crawled
'Tween the twin trees and uprooted, unto pieces smashed
The wheel, cleaved the bird's beak and the elephant slammed,
So that these elders do their heads hang in shame?

Note

The Nāyakī enumerates the deeds of Lord Kṛṣṇa, directed towards the annihilation of the evil forces, the opponents of the devotees. If such a great Benefactor could come and

acharya.org

join her, it would put to shame the elders who were all bereft of good qualities, condemning Him as heartless, faithless and so on. It needs to be specially noted that the Lord's appearance is sought, in this song, by the Nāyaki, not for her embrace but to vindicate her Lord's glory in the eyes of the elders as the One who is not only quite responsive but also remorseful. Did He not, as Śrī Rāma, rush to the Ṛṣis of Daṇḍakāraṇya, to enquire their needs and place His services at their disposal and apologise to them profusely, finding that they had already come a few steps forward to exhibit their sufferings at the hands of the Rākṣasas?

nāṇum niṟaiyum kavarntu, eṉṉai nal neñcam kūvikkoṇṭu,
cēṇ uyar vāṉattu irukkum tēva pirāṉ-taṉṉai
āṉai eṉ tōḻī! ulakutōṟu alar tūṟṟi, ām
kōṉaikaḷ ceytu, kutiriyāy maṭal ūrtumē. (V–3–9)

Translation

Oh, mate, be sure, I shall unto *maṭal* resort, getting out of hand
And arraign, in every way and in all lands,
The Chief of the Celestials, Who my good mind stole
Besides my shyness and modesty and stays now in the heaven tall.

Note

In the seventh song of this decad, the Nāyakī had complained that the Lord had stolen her heart and fled with it to the milk-ocean. Apprehending that the Nāyakī might get at Him even there, He seems to have since gone to the high heavens, so as to be out of her reach. But the Nāyakī is now determined to get out of her shell and ferret Him out wherever He might go and expose Him thoroughly all over the land.

yām maṭal ūrntum, em āḻi aṅkaip pirāṉ uṭai
tū maṭal taṉ am tuḻāy-malar koṇṭu cūtuvōm-
ām maṭam iṉṟi, teruvutōru ayal-taiyalār
nā maṭaṅkāp paḻi tūṟṟi, nāṭum iraikkavē. (V–3–10)

acharya.org

Translation

Shaking off all reserve, street after street shall I enter
And make women in all the worlds shout beside me and clamour,
In sheer sympathy for me, having recourse to *maṭal*,
And from the Lord, wielding the discus lovely, procure
And wear the tuḷaci garland, cool and lovely, with petals pure.

Note

If the Nāyakī contemplates such a drastic move, totally repugnant to her essential nature, it is because of the exuberance of her God-love and the resultant intolerance of delayed consummation. This aspect has already been dealt with, *in extenso*, in the preamble to this decad. At the end of all these hectic activities, all that the Nāyakī aspires for is the Lord's tuḷaci garland, that sacred basil. The Nāyakī still hopes that, frightened by this harrowing state of her darting forth, with '*Maṭal*' (the tooth-edged branch of the palmyrah tree) in hand, the Lord would rush forward, with discus in hand, and placate her by bedecking her with the tuḷaci garland worn on His person; if, however, He did not turn up, it would mean, she threatens, the end of them both as in a holocaust.

iraikkum karuṅ kaṭal vaṇṇaṉ kaṇṇa-pirāṉ taṉṉai
viraik koḷ poḷil-kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
niraik koḷ antāti ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattum
uraikka vallārkku vaikuntam ākum tam ūr ellām. (V–3–11)

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten,
Out of the thousand, chaste and elegant, of Caṭakōpaṉ,
From Kurukūr, abounding in orchards, full of fragrance,
Adoring Lord Kaṇṇaṉ, of the hue of the roaring ocean,
Will heavenly bliss enjoy right at their residence.

Notes

(i) The Lord will court those that recite these ten songs and remain inseparably united with them. Where the Lord

acharya.org

is there is Heaven and thus the chanters of this Tiruvāymoḻi (decad) get the Heaven transported unto them.

(ii) " *Roaring ocean* "—The ocean is in a state of upheaval, the bottom of the sea throwing the sands right up to the surface in violent agitation, like unto the king of the ocean who appeared before Rāma trembling, when the latter threatened to drive a shaft into the bosom of the sea and dry it up altogether. The Lord was in the same predicament as the King of the ocean when the Nāyaki threatened Him with dire consequences.

Fifth Centum—Fourth Decad (V-4)
(Ūr ellam tuñci)

Preamble

In order to put through the proceedings contemplated by the Nāyakī in the preceding decad, she has to first of all draw a sketch of her lover (the accused) for public exhibition and arraignment. But it is pitch dark and she can't draw the picture. It seems as if the Lord is afraid of being exposed by the Nāyakī and has deliberately induced darkness of such intensity, The whole world is fast asleep, and she has no company. In such a milieu, she has recourse to the contemplation ofthe Lord's auspicious traits, soothing indeed unto her aching heart.

ūr ellām tuñci, ulaku ellām naḷ iruḷ āy,
nīr ellām tēṟi, ōr nīḷ iravuāy nīṇṭatāl;
pār ellām uṇṭa nam pāmpu-aṇaiyāṉ vārāṉāl;
ār-ellē! valviṉaiyēṉ āvi kāppār, iṉiyē? (V–4–1)

Translation

The town is asleep and the world in darkness plunged,
Very, very quiet, the land and water have become;
Alas! ' tis one long night, the Lord on serpent-bed,
Who once ate up the worlds, unto me doesn't come;
Who will save the life of this terrible sinner indeed?

acharya.org

Note

The Nāyakī laments that the benevolent Lord, who sustained all the worlds with their contents, in His stomach and protected them during the deluge, does not come to her aid in her present state of distress. The slanderous folks whose gossips actually fostered her God-love are fast asleep and so is the rest of the world. The Nāyakī cannot move about either because it is one long night, even longer than the longish* nights of the Devas and visibility is next to nil. Further, there is none awake except her lone self.

āvi kāppār iṉi ār?-āḷ kaṭal maṉ viṉ mūṭi,
mā vikāram āy, ōr val iravuāy nīṇṭatāl;
kāvi cēr vaṇṇaṉ eṉ kaṇṇaṉum vārāṉāl;
pāviyēṉ neñcamē! nīyum pāṅku allaiyē. (V-4-2)

Translation

Who will save my life hereafter?
You, this sinner's mind, aren't friendly either;
Alas! tis one long, grim night that hides
The deep sea, the land and the sky; Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord
Of blue tint, *my sole Refuge* doesn't unto me come.

Note

In the middle of the famous 'Rāsa Krīḍa, when Kṛṣṇa danced with the Gopīs, the damsels of Vrindāvan, He disappeared for a while, and the Gopis were thrown on tenter hooks. But then, Kṛṣṇa reappeared and made amends for His sudden withdrawal by assuming the form, *par excellence*, far more exquisite than in the earlier session. The Nāyakī too probably expected the Lord to present Himself before her likewise, but this expectation didn't materialise. Hence, this lamentation.

---

* Whereas 'Time' stands still in the self-luminous region, known as the 'High Heaven', and it is all day and no night (darkness-tamas), the day of the 'Devas' in the lower reaches of the upper worlds is as long as one year of ours, six months (mid-January to mid-July-Uttarāyana) constituting a day for them and the remaining six months (mid-July to mid-January—Dakṣiṇāyana) their night.

acharya.org

nīyum pāṅku allaikāṇ, neñcamē! nīḷ iravum
ōyum poḻutu lṇṟi, ūḻiāy nīṇṭatāl;
kāyum kaṭum cilai eṇ kākuttaṇ vārāṇāl;
māyum vakai aṟiyēṇ, valviṇaiyēṇ peṇ piṟantē. (V–4–3)

Translation

You too, my mind, do not with me co-operate;
Like unto eternity does the longish night further elongate;
Kākuttaṇ, whose stern bow does the enemies annihilate,
Appears not before me; this fell sinner knows not
How to end this life, born a woman, alas! what's my lot?

Note

The Nāyakī is in the same predicament as Sītā during her captivity in Laṅkā. Sītā lamented that there was none in that hostile land who could help her with poison or a sharp knife to end her miserable life. There at least, Sītā could hear the heartening sound from Śri Rāma's (Kākuttaṇ's) bow in the nearby battlefield, which disillusioned her and set her mind at ease, when Rāvaṇa produced the illusory head of Rāma and wanted her to believe that Rāma had been killed and his head severed. And now, Rāma does not come and present Himself before the Nāyakī. Her own mind, the principal accessory, does not subserve her, the darksome night, interminably long, aggravates her misery and above all, a woman that she is, with no independence, she is not free to die at will, by putting an end to her life.

peṇ piṟantār eytum perum tuyar kāṇkilēṇ eṇṟu
oṇ cuṭarōṇ vārātu oḻittāṇ; im maṇ aḷanta
kaṇ periya cevvāy em kār ēṟu vārāṇāl;
eṇ periya cintai nōy tīrppār ār eṇṇaiyē? (V–4–4)

Translation

Methinks the Sun from me hides and declines to see
A woman in such great distress; my cloud-hued Lord,
Trim as the bull, with eyes wide and lips red,

acharya.org

Who the worlds spanned, comes not unto me;
Alas! who can indeed cure me of my cruel mental malady?

Note

The sun's diurnal course is put through, regularly, at the Lord's command and he dare not disobey. And yet, he would not come out, for fear of seeing the Nāyakī in such great distress. At the same time, he is afraid of being hunted out by the Lord's emissaries and, therefore, keeps hiding somewhere beyond their reach. This has resulted in prolongation of the night. Well, Sun or no Sun, why should the Lord who had enthralled the Nāyakī and kept her madly in love with him, keep Himself away from her? This makes the Nāyakī dread the frightful prospect of having to linger for ever with her mental malady for which there seems to be no cure.

ār eṉṉai ārāyvār?—aṉṉaiyarum tōḻiyarum
nīr eṉṉē! eṉṉātē, nīḻ iravum tuñcuvarāl;
kār aṉṉa mēṉi nam kaṇṇaṉum vārāṉāl;
pēr eṉṉai māyātā!, valviṉaiyēṉ piṉ niṉṟē. (V-4-5)

Translation

The unrelenting elders and mates sleep thro' the long night;
Alas! our cloud-hued Kaṇṇaṉ too appears not before me,
Thus there's none to stand by and think of me
And yet, my name shall stay on, all right,
Although this fell sinner be dead and gone.

Note

Oh, how enchanting is this God-sickness! The Āḻvār who keeps scanning the whole scene, laments that there is none to think of him. What is even more exciting is his own statement that his name will outlive him. How true! the entire vaiṣṇavite world rests on him. But there the Nāyakī means to say that, on the one hand, the mates and the elders sleep on with no thought of her, while, on the other, the cloud-hued Lord is withholding Himself. And, therefore, she finds herself left alone and even if she dies, as she would

acharya.org

very much like to, her name would still stay behind, making it impossible to close the pages of history upon her. It is noteworthy that the Āḻvār bears the name of the Lord's feet (Śaṭakōpa) where all of us rest our heads.

piṉ niṉṟu kātal-nōy neñcam peritu aṭumāl;
muṉ niṉṟu irā-ūḻi kaṇ putaiya mūṭiṟṟāl;
maṉ niṉṟa cakkarattu em māyavaṉum vārāṉāl;
in niṉṟa nīḻ āvi kāppār ār, iv iṭattē? (V–4–6)

Translation

This love-sickness which from behind eggs me on,
Does my mind consume; alas! this age-long night, right in front,
Blinds my eyes, my wondrous Lord who the inseparable discus holds on,
Comes not; who then can unto my lingering life protection grant?

Notes

(i) It is a strange sickness that afflicts the Nāyakī. This Godsickness or God-love keeps on pushing her from behind and will, she says, pursue her even on the yonder side of death, unlike the earthly kind of sickness, which holds sway only as long as there is life.

(ii) While the night makes for physical blindness, God-love screens her mind's eye. It is a pity, the darkness prevents the Nāyakī from beholding her Lord, if He were at all to present Himself before her at that hour.

kāppār ār, iv iṭattu? kaṅku iruḷiṉ nuṇ-tuḷi āy,
cēṇ-pālatu ūḻi āy, celkiṉṟa kaṅkulvāyt
tūp pāla veṇ caṅku cakkarattaṉ tōṉṟāṉāl;
tīp pāla valviṉaiyēṉ, teyvaṅkāḷ! eṉ ceykēṉō? (V–4–7)

Translation

The Lord, donning the discus and the conch, white and immaculate,
Appears not before me, this night, dark and dewy;

acharya.org

Who indeed can protect me, in this state?
Oh, godlings, what can this dreadful sinner do?

Notes

(i) When the whole world is plunged in protracted darkness the Nāyakī finds the godlings awake and, in a spirit of companionship, the wakeful Nāyakī cries out her woe to the wakeful deities and perhaps enlists their sympathy.

(ii) The Nāyakī who had earlier been proclaiming from the house-top that the Lord is the Sole Protector and we, His Subjects, are His exclusive vassals solely dependent on Him, now looks at the 'Jīva' (Soul), in isolation, and feels tormented, saying "how am I to be protected?"

teyvaṅkāḷ! eṉ ceykēṉ?—ōr iravu ēḷ ūḷi āy,
mey vantu niṉṟu, eṉatu āvi melivikkum;
kaivanta cakkarattu eṉ kaṇṇaṉum vārāṉāl;
taivanta taṉ teṉṟal vem cuṭaril tāṉ aṭumē (V-4-8)

Translation

Oh, godlings, what can I do? ages, a single night does loom,
To torment my life, it has, in flesh and blood, come;
Even Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord, who the Discus always wields
Comes not; so then the cool and soothing southerly breeze
Blisters me worse than the fire well ablaze

Note

The Nāyakī is already emaciated due to separation from her Lord; the dark night of extra-ordinary duration now exploits her weakness by inflicting on her countless miseries. In her present state, even the cool, southerly breeze is far from soothing; actually, it produces the diametrically opposite effect. The night seems to assume, with a vengeance, several forms, (even as Sage Saubhari did for the enjoyment of pleasures with his numerous wives), to torment the Nāyakī in ever so many ways. In the olden days, when a person was pilloried in public for criminal offence, he would break down but the authority would nevertheless go on with

acharya.org

the punishment, after providing due nourishment for his revival such as butter-milk etc.

vem cuṭaril tāṉ aṭumāl, viṅku iruḷin nuṇ tuḷi āy;
am cuṭara veyyōṉ aṇi neṭum tēr tōṉṟātāl;
ceṅ cuṭart tāmaraikkaṇ-celvaṉum vārāṉāl;
neñcu iṭar tīrppār iṉi yār?—niṉṟu uṟukukiṉṟēṉē (V–4–9)

Translation

The darksome night with minute dew beset
Is unto me hotter than fire; alas! nowhere in sight
Is Sun's chariot, large and lovely or the opulent Lord bright,
Of red-lotus eyes; my heart does all the time melt,
Who will indeed my mind's ache dispel in such a state?

Note

The night is very oppressive and the Nāyakī is sinking deep in dejection. There is, however, no hope of relief yet, neither the Sun has come out nor even the Lord whom an ardent devotee of the calibre of the Nāyakī could reasonably expect in such moments of distress Indeed, the Lord is the Sun that never sets and He illumines the entire universe Heaven downwards The rising of the Sun would but be the dawn heralding the appearance of that Great Sun, the Lord. But then, the night is tormenting the Nāyakī, through its accomplice, the blistering dew, like unto Mārīca, pressed into service by the nefarious Rāvana.

niṉṟu urukukiṉṟēṉē pōla, neṭu vāṉam
ceṉṟu urukī, nuṇ tuḷi āy, celkiṉṟa kaṅkulvāy
aṉṟu orukāl vaiyam aḷanta pirāṉ vārāṉ eṉṟu
oṉṟu orukāl collatu ulakō uṟaṅkumē! (V–4–10)

Translation

Alas! the world had into deep slumber gone,
In this dark night, the minute dew drops down the sky broad,
Like poor me, the sky too seems to melt down,
There's none to tell me but once that the Lord

acharya.org

Who spanned the worlds once upon a time,
Would not unto me care to come.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī thinks that the dew drops come from the sky, melting down, in distress, like her c.f. similar sentiments expressed by the Nāyakī in II-I ante.

(ii) It would be some consolation for her, if there was yet another soul, awake like her, to sustain her by recounting the Lord's wondrous deeds as Tṛvikrama or tell her that she needn't expect the Lord whose habit it was to keep away like this. In the latter case, the moment the Nāyakī was disabused of her fond hopes, her life would be extinct.

uṟaṅkuvāṉ pōl yōkuceyta perumāṉai
ciṟanta poḻil cūḻ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
niṟam kiḷarnta antāti āyirattuḷ ip pattāl
iṟantu pōy vaikuntam cērāvāṟu eṅṅaṉēyō? (V-4-11)

Translation

How can those that recite these songs ten
Out of the tuneful thousand, composed by Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, surrounded by orchards lovely,
Adoring the Lord who is asleep apparently
But thinks out ways for His Subjects to thrive,
Fail to enter Heaven at the end of their lives?

Note

The Nāyakī had said, in the preceding song, that the whole world was asleep, suggesting that even the Lord had gone to sleep. The Lord was, however, quick to point out to the Āḻvār that He was not asleep but was only contemplating the manner in which He should present Himself to the Āḻvār and regale him. Thus informed, the Āḻvār could sustain himself and so also, the very township of Kurukūr, as could

acharya.org

be inferred from the reference to its orchards, gay and lovely. Those that are conversant with this decad are bound to reach at the end of the present span of life, the high heaven, the land of perennial light, presided over by the Lord, the perpetual Sun.

Fifth Centum – Fifth Decad (V-5)
(Eṅṅaṉēyō, aṉṉaimirkāḷ)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār felt miserably handicapped by darkness and dew, the inner meaning whereof is that this land of nescience is enveloped in 'tamas' or darkness. The Nāyakī's irresistible urge for the speedy attainment of the Lord, witnessed in V-3 (Mācu aṟu cōti), violently disturbed her firm conviction in the Lord as the Sole Means for attaining Him and made her contemplate the devious indulgence in self--effort, such as embarking on the technique of 'maṭal'. The dark, dewy night, presented in V-4 (Ūrellām tuñci), only typifies the Samsāra, with its characteristic nescience, into which one is thrown back, when one loses track of one's essential nature and with that, the correct perspective. In śloka 49 of the 'Stotra Ratna', Saint Yāmunācārya only echoed this, when he likened a person, entangled in 'Samsāra', to one badly caught up in foul weather, with dark, dense clouds gathering in, losing the sense of direction, beaten continually by ever-expanding miseries pouring in like the torrential rain. The sun-rise symbolises the removal of darkness, that is, ignorance and the influx of spiritual light (Satva) or purity. The Āḻvār could, with the return of light, enjoy, in his mind's eye, the glorious vision of the Lord, enshrined in Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi.

This decad is sung by the Āḻvār, while still in the feminine state. The elders who tried to bring the Nāyakī round by admonishing her, are hit back. The Nāyakī questions the propriety of their admonishing her whose heart stands rivetted to the exquisite form of the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuti.

acharya.org

eṅṅaṉēyō, aṉṉaimīrkāḷ! eṉṉai muṉivatu nīr?
naṅkal kōlat tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
caṅkinōṭum, nēmiyōṭum, tāmaraik kaṅkaḷōṭum,
ceṅkaṉi vāy oṉṟiṉōtum, celkiṉṟatu eṉ neñcamē. (V-5-1)

Translation

Lift I can't my mind from Nampi, the Lord exquisite,
I beheld at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi, the conch and discus
In His hands, His lotus eyes and red lips, peerless,
With me how can you, elders, find fault?

Notes

(i) This pilgrim centre, deep south in Tamil Nadu, is also known as *Vaiṣṇava Vāmana Kṣetra* The end-stanza of this decad also says that those who learn this decad will become Vaiṣṇavas. Further, it was at this particular shrine that Kāriyār, the father of Māraṉ (who later became Saint Nammāḷvār), prayed for an issue and the Lord signified to him through the temple priest that He would Himself incarnate as his son and blessed the couple with temple honours. At the Lord's command, His high Chamberlain, Śeneśa, otherwise known as Viṣvakeśena, incarnated as Nammāḷvār, the Saviour of mankind And so, this pilgrim centre is intimately linked up with the advent of Nammāḷvār.;

(ii) The query, as in the last line of this verse, serves to bring out the fact that the Nāyaki has only followed in the footsteps of the elders who had initiated her in the worship of the Lord and, far from being blamed, she is really praise worthy. Be they one's sons or disciples, when they stand launched into the domain of God-love, they become worthy of worship In this context, Iṭu cites the following apt anecdote. When Kūrattāḷvāṉ lost his mother, Naṅkayār, the father wavered for a while whether he should marry again and lead the life of a householder as ordained by the Śāstras. Seeing, however, the way step-mothers generally behave, the bereaved father's sympathy was on the side of the son,

acharya.org

the more so, when the latter was advancing spiritually. The father, therefore, decided to lean more on the son than on the Śāstras and thus be more serviceable to the son than be a slavish stickler to the ordinary rules for one's own gratification, rather than edification.

eṉ neñciṉāl nōkkik kāṇīr eṉṉai muṉiyātē;
teṉ naṉ cōlait tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
miṉṉu nūlum, kuṇṭalamum, mārpil tirumaṟuvum,
maṉṉu pūṇum, nāṉku, tōḷum, vantu eṅkum niṉṟiṭumē.
(V–5–2)

Translation

Rather than admonish me, you elders will do well
To see thro' my mind; after I beheld
The Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi with lovely orchards
The mole on His winsome chest, the shining sacred thread,
The ear-rings, the jewels on His person inseparably worn
And His shoulders four are by me seen wherever I turn.

Note

The elders will not allow themselves to be bamboozled by the Nāyakī and they insist that they too have seen the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi. The Nāyakī sharply retorts that, if only they could see through her eyes, they would feel the difference all right. Wherever she turned, she saw the shining sacred thread like the lightning tearing the bosom of the cloud, the mole on the Lord's chest, the sweet array of jewels and the shoulders of the Lord.

niṉṟiṭum, ticaikkum, naiyum eṉṟu aṉṉaiyarum muṉitir;
kuṉṟa māṭat tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
veṉṟi villum, taṇṭum vāḷum, cakkaramum, caṅkamum,
niṉṟu tōṉṟik kaṇṇuḷ nīṅkā; neñcuḷḷum nīṅkāvē. (V–5–3)

Translation

You, elders say all things harsh about me,
That I wither down, looking stupid and dazed;
Better know that after my beholding the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi

acharya.org

With its castles tall, His victorious bow, mace,
Sword, conch and discus cannot from my mind be eflaced.

Note

The Lord's lovely weapons also decorate the Lord's person just like His numerous jewels. This twin aspect is extended to the Nāyakī's own experience, the Lord's weapons feasting her eyes as well as her mind.

nīṅka nillā kaṇṇa nīrkaḷ eṉṟu aṉṉaiyarum muṉiṭir,
tēṉ koḷ cōlait tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
pūn taṇ mālait taṇ tuḷāyum, poṉ muṭiyum, vaṭivum,
pāṅku tōṉṟum paṭṭum, nānum, pāviyēṉ pakkattavē. (V–5–4)

Translation

You are indeed cross with me, oh, Elders,
That it isn't possible to wipe off my tears;
After seeing the Lord at Tirukkuṟunkuṭi, with orchards lovely,
His gold crown, tulaci garland, cool and comely,
His form exquisite, the waist-band and silk robe fine,
All these beside this sinner do always shine

Notes

(i) It is but appropriate that one sheds tears of joy while contemplating His auspicious traits And so, the Nāyakī is at a loss to understand why the elderly women should frown at her for being in tears, all the time She says that with the glorious vision of the Iconic Form of the Lord at Tirukkuṟunkuṭi, ever in front of her, she can't but shed tears of ecstasy, which will never dry up. Perhaps the flow of honey from the flowers in the big gardens of the pilgrim centre might stop but not the Nāyakī's tears There is, therefore, no point in the elders being cross with her on this account.

(ii) The Nāyakī calls herself a sinner in spite of the glorious vision before her, because it is only a vision after all, outside the purview of her physical senses, the external perception, embrace etc

acharya.org

pakkam nōkki niṟkum, naiyum eṉṟu aṉṉaiyarum muṉitir;
takka kīrttit tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
tokka cōtit toṇṭai vāyum, nīṇṭa puruvaṅkaḷum,
takka tāmaraik kaṇṇum, pāviyēṉ āviyiṉ mēlaṉavē. (V–5–5)

Translation

That I pine for my Lord, you, elders, fret and fume,
Look do I, in all directions, for Him of great fame;
Having seen the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi, His red lips radiant,
Long brows and lotus eyes, a mass of radiance,
Prey on this sinner's life, in constant attendance.

Note

The Lord's fine features with symmetrical perfection naturally enthral the Nāyakī's mind and it meet would be that the elders looked upon her with pride instead of frowning at her.

mēlum vaṉ paḻi nam kuṭikku ival eṉṟu aṉṉai kāṇakkoṭāḷ;
cōlai cūḻ taṉ tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
kōla nīḻ koṭi mūkkum, tāmaraik kaṇṇum, kaṉi vāyum,
nīla mēṉiyum, nāṉku tōḷum, eṉ neñcam niṟaintaṉavē. (V–5–6)

Translation

Mother fears this girl will bring a bad name
Unto her sacred clan for all time to come,
And the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuti, she wouldn't allow me to behold,
But Him I have beheld, His nose, long and lovely, lips red,
Lotus eyes, blue tint and shoulders four have my mind filled.

Note

The Mother is apprehensive that the Nāyakī is transgressing her bounds as a 'prapanna' who has to await the descent of the Lord's grace, and decides not to allow the Nāyakī to see Nampi, (The perfect Lord) at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi. But then, this is like erecting a bund after all the water in the basin has flown down the stream. The truth of the matter

acharya.org

is that the Nāyakī has already seen Nampi and right from the moment she beheld Him, all the features of the Lord, as set out in this song, stand indelibly imprinted in her mind. The restrictions now imposed by the Mother have, therefore, no meaning. What would have been exceptionable in the earlier stages becomes praiseworthy in such an advanced state of uncontrollable yearning for quick consummation of God-love It is a pity the elders could not appreciate this

niṟainta vaṉ paḷi nam kuṭikku ival eṉṟu aṉṉai kāṇakkoṭāḷ;
ciṟanta kīrttit tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ.
niṟainta cōti veḷḷam cūḻnta nīṇṭa poṉ mēṉiyoṭum
niṟaintu, eṉ uḷḷē niṉṟoḷintāṉ; nēmi aṅkai uḷatē. (V-5-7)

Translation

The mother wouldn't allow me to behold the Lord
At Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi of high renown, lest I should,
A standing slur on her clan prove; but I've seen Him
And in my mind stands He firm, of golden form,
Radiance, full and flooding, with the comely Discus in His lovely palm.

Note

As already stated in V-3-4, the rebukes of the elders who can't see eye to eye with the Nāyakī in the matter of God-love, sedulously nurture it and the Nāyakī only feels elated, rather flattered by such rebukes With all His ineffable radiant beauty, the Lord has entered inside the Nāyakī and filled her entire being (*Vigraha vyāpti* or specific presence as in His beautiful person, the iconic Form), as an act of benign grace. The Divine presence (*Vigraha vyāpti*), of God who abides latent (*Svarūpa vyāpti*) in the heart of one and all, becomes manifest when His grace and our sanctity co-operate. This was elicited by Nañciyar from Tirukkurukai Piḷḷāṉ one day when the former was proceeding to the temple of Lord Raṅganātha.

acharya.org

kaiyuḷ naṉ mukam vaikkum, naiyum eṉṟu aṉṉaiyarum muṉitir;
mai koḷ māṭat tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
ceyya tāmaraik kaṇṇum, alkulum, ciṟṟiṭaiyum, vaṭivum,
moyya nīḷ kuḻal tāḻnta tōḷkaḷum, pāviyēṉ muṉ niṟkumē.
(V–5–8)

Translation

You, elders, fret and frown that I do dwindle
And bury my lovely face into my palms;
Having seen the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi with black castles,
His eyes like the lotus red, His exquisite form,
The waist thin, the abdominal region and the shoulders
With the locks playing thereon, stay firm before this sinner.

Notes

(i) Seated inside the hollow of a tamarind tree in the quadrangle of the temple at Kurukūr (Āḻvār Tirunakari), the Saint enjoyed the vision of the Lord, enshrined at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi, as set above. Carried away by the splendour of the vision, the Nāyakī was, however, tempted to clasp the Lord of such exquisite charm. Her inability to do so makes her very sad and she, therefore, buries her face in her palms.

(ii) The mansions in Tirukkuṟuṅkuti have become black either on account of their antiquity or because the dark blue tint of the Lord's image enshrined there is reflected all around.

muṉ niṉṟāy eṉṟu tōḷimārkaḷum aṉṉaiyarum muṉitir;
maṉṉu māṭat tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
ceṉṉi nīḷ muṭi āti āya ulappu il aṉikalattaṉ-
kaṉṉal, pāl, amutu āki vantu-eṉ neñcam kaḷiyāṉē. (V–5–9)

Translation

You, mates and elders, do chastise me
That I appear before all; I did see
The Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi with mansions stately,

acharya.org

Wearing the crown long and countless other jewels lovely;
Firmly fixed in my mind since then stands
Like cane-juice. milk and nectar, this spectacle grand

Note

The mates and the elders would want the Nāyakī to keep indoors, consistent with feminine modesty. But she says that the exquisite charm of the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuti, bedecked with a vast array of lovely jewels, has already taken possession of her and that she is not, therefore, in a position to conform to the ordinary norms of feminine conduct. With the Lord in front of her mind all the time, how could she shut herself up behind the doors?

kaḷiya mikkatu ōr kātalaḷ ivaḷ eṉṟu aṉṉai kāṇakkoṭāḷ;
vaḷu il kīrttit tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi nampiyai nāṉ kaṇṭapiṉ,
kuḷumit tēvar kuḷaṅkaḷ kaitoḷac cōti-veḷḷattiṉuḷḷē
eḷuvatu ōr uru eṉ neñcuḷ eḷum; ārkkum aṟivu-aritē. (V–5–10)

Translation

My mother sees my God-love intense
And decides not to allow me access
To the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuti any more,
Well, what does it unto me matter?
After I beheld Nampi of fame flawless,
The effulgent Lord, adored by Celestials in strength,
Does in my heart shine ever but this none here can comprehend

Note

Surely, this is not a case of " out of sight, out of mind " or the proverbial mellowing of sorrow due to separation, with the passage of time. The Lord shines perpetually, in all His resplendence, before the Nāyakī's mind, a grand spectacle attracting even the denizens of heaven, clasping the hands of one another, so as not to be swept off by the Lord's brilliance in spate.

acharya.org

aṟivu-ariya pirāṉai, āḻi aṅkaiyaṉaiyē alaṟṟi,
naṟiya naṉ malar nāṭi, naṉ kurukurc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
kuṟi koḷ āyirattuḷ ivai pattum tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi-ataṉmēl
aṟiyak kaṟṟu vallār vaiṭṇavar, āḷ kaṭal ñālattuḷḷē. (V–5–11)

Translation

Those that learn well these songs ten,
Which unto holy Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi pertain,
Expatiating the grandeur of Nampi, His form, jewels and weapons,
Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
The connoisseur of fragrant flowers fine,
Chanting lustily the glory of the Lord, difficult to comprehend,
Who does the discus hold in His lovely hand,
Will as chaste vaiṭṇavar be lauded, in this world, sea-bound,

Notes

(i) *Fragrant flowers fine*: This could refer to either these hymns full of fragrance, like unto a collection of choice flowers of sweet fragrance of soulful flowers offered in a genuine spirit, emitting the fragrance of self-less service.

(ii) *Chaste Vaiṣṇavas*: Those who fully appreciate, despite their stay in this arid land of samsāra, the sanctity of the pilgrim centres, hallowed by the Lord's loving association, as well as the 'Nitya Sūris' in the High Heavens do.

Fifth Centum—Sixth Decad (V-6)
(Kaṭal-ñālam ceytēṉum)

Preamble

The Mother finds Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, seated like a discourser, with the fingers in an instructional pose and declaring that it is she that created the whole world, that she would become the world herself and so on. The bewildered mother, when queried by her kinsmen says that the Nāyakī is perhaps possessed by the

acharya.org

Supreme Lord who is the Inner Self of all beings. Every song in this decad is in two distinct parts, namely, the narration of the Nāyakī's God-vision (man identified with God), followed by the Mother's suggestion that it is perhaps God who has taken possession of the Nāyakī, that speaks through her. There is of course, a parallel for this kind of behaviour of the Nāyakī in Śri Viṣṇu Purāṇa, V-13-23. In the midst of that rapturous ball-dance, the classical 'Rāsakrīdā', Lord Kṛṣṇa suddenly withdrew Himself from the Gopīs of Vṛndāvan, who were literally bursting with joy in the company of the Divine cowherd boy, who danced in between every two girls, assuming ubiquity to the extent needed. The Lord's sudden disappearance was motivated by His desire to stabilise the Gopīs' God-enjoyment, which was at its highest ebb at that crucial moment, much beyond their capacity to bear. Some time later, He appeared in their midst back again, assuming a far more enchanting Form than before, as if to make amends for the pangs of separation inflicted on them. But what happened to the Gopīs during this interval? They were sunk deep in dejection, expressed by them in immortal songs, known as 'Gopikā-Gītā', Some of the Gopīs also resorted to the technique of impersonation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, so as to sustain themselves, as brought out in the Śloka of Śri Viṣṇu Purāṇa, referred to above. There was a Gopī claiming to be none other than Kṛṣṇa and calling upon her mates to verify the truth of her statement from her gait Another asserted that she was Kṛṣna and started playing on the flute; yet another, posing as Kṛṣṇa, addressed a Gopī as· "You, deadly snake, stay, or I will kill you" That other Gopī deigned to play the role of Kāliyaṇ, the snake, so that she could be smeared with the dust from the feet of Kṛṣṇa (the Gopī simulating Kṛṣṇa). With appropriate gesticulations and a great deal of gusto, a Gopī feigning as Kṛṣṇa, performed feats such as holding Mount Govardhan aloft, slaying of Dhenukāsura and so on By such means, these Gopīs managed to sustain themselves without succumbing to the pangs of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa There is also the example set by Śrī Āṇṭāḷ through her immortal "Tiruppāvai", the daughter of a high class Brahmin (Viṣṇucitta) adopting, by inclination, the pastoral life of the shepherds and becoming one of them. This provides, therefore, the key to this decad.

acharya.org

kaṭal-ñālam ceytēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṭal-ñālam āvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṭal-ñālam koṇṭēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṭal-ñālam kīṇṭēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṭal ñālam uṇṭēṉum yāṉe eṉṉum;
kaṭal ñālattu īcaṉ vantu ēṟakkolō?
kaṭal ñālattīrkku ivai eṉ collukēṉ-
kaṭal ñālattu eṉ makaḷ kaṟkiṉṟavē? (V–6–1)

Translation

Says my daughter of this sea-bound world,
'Tis she that this world did create,
And all the world she would permeate;
It was she that took (from Bali) all the worlds,
She it was that pulled the world out and held
In her stomach (during deluge) all the worlds;
Unto You worldlings, what can I say about this?
She is by the Lord Supreme possessed, perhaps

Notes

(i) It is God that created the entire Universe The relevant expressions in 'Candogya Upaniṣad' are 'Sadeva', 'Ekameva' and 'advitīyam', indicative of the fact that the Lord combines in Himself all the three causes of creation, namely, the 'Upādhāna' (material cause) 'Sahakāri' (Operative cause) and 'Nimitta' (Instrumental cause). The fact that the Lord is the sole cause of creation is underlined by the Nāyakī's statement that it is She (God, manifest in her) that created the sea-bound worlds.

Apart from the Lord combining in Himself the triple causes of creation, yet another unique feature is that He is not apart from the things created. He resides in all things and beings, having name and form. The different names denoting them all, refer to Him as well, He being the Inner Soul of all This is indeed unique, as, in the work-a-day world, the names of the creator and the things created are distinct. In the terse language of Vedanta, this special feature is known

acharya.org

as 'aparyavasāna vritti' and this is what the Nāyakī emphasises. Having created the world, she also becomes the world, the thing created) by permeating the whole of it.

(ii) The mother wonders how her daughter, a staunch exponent of 'Viśiṣṭādvaita', the triune monism, says things smacking of absolute monism (advaita) and apprehends that the Nāyakī, perhaps, stands possessed by the Lord Himself and, therefore, speaks in this strain, The kinsmen who expected the mother to be more specific in her diagnosis of the Nāyakī's malady, are cut to size, when she says that her daughter is in such a highly evolved state of God-love, on a par with the exalted ever-free angels of Heaven, that her actions and utterances are much beyond the grasp of the worldlings who were utter strangers to such ennobling experience of God-love and God-enjoyment.

kaṟkum kalvikku ellai ilaṉē eṉṉum;
kaṟkum kalvi āvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṟkum kalvi ceyvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum,
kaṟkum kalvi tirppēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṟkum kalvic cāramum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kaṟkum kalvi-nātaṉ vantu ēṟakkolō?
kaṟkum kalviyīrkku ivai eṉ collukēṉ-
kaṟkum kalvi eṉ makal kāṅkiṉṟavē? (V-6-2)

Translation

On learning's threshold is my daughter and yet she says,
All branches of learning she had mastered, she is
Learning itself, all learning by her was set up,
She puts an end to it all and just stores it up
Inside her, she is the quintessence of all learning,
Evidently, she is by the Lord possessed, whom all learning
Reflects, what can I tell you, at the bottom of learning?

Notes

(i) The Lord is the embodiment of all learning, the aggregate of the Vedas; He disseminates particular branches of

acharya.org

learning at the appropriate moments; He is the final arbiter of the true meanings of the texts and at the time of dissolution of the worlds, He stores up all learning in His mind. Indeed, the object of all learning is to know Him.

(ii) *Mastered all learning*: Transposed as Kṛṣṇa, that the Nāyakī is, this could refer to the mastery attained by Śri Kṛṣṇa within a marvellously short period of sixty-four days, as the pupil of Sāndīpini.

kāṇkiṉṟa nilam ellām yāṉe eṉṉum;
kāṇkiṉṟa vicumpu ellām yāṉē eṉṉum;
kāṇkiṉṟa vem tī ellām yāṉē eṉṉum;
kāṇkiṉṟa ik kāṟṟu ellām yāṉē eṉṉum;
kāṇkiṉṟa kaṭal ellām yāṉē eṉṉum;
kāṇkiṉṟa kaṭal vaṉṉaṉ ēṟakkolō?
kāṇkiṉṟa ulakattīrkku ēṉ collukēṉ-
kāṇkiṉṟa eṉ kārikai ceykiṉṟavē? (V-6-3)

Translation

Says my daughter with insight clear,
The visible elements, the Earth, Wind and Water,
Sky and Fire she is; seems she possessed indeed
By the sea-hued Lord, what can I tell you, of this world?

Note

The mother tells the kinsmen that, unlike them all, with a narrow vision, confined to the things seen around, her daughter (Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī) has a cosmic vision. New visions of beauty shine before the eyes of a Saint. He alone can see and enjoy the viśvarūpa (Universal form) of the Lord. He hears the unheard melodies and enjoys divine scents, unfelt on the Earth, and soars into an ampler ether, diviner air. The Nāyakī, deputising as God, says that she is everything, the elements and all, with the clear knowledge that the elements are subject to His control and are ordained by Him.

acharya.org

ceykiṉṟa kiti ellām yāṉē eṉṉum;
ceyvāṉ niṉṟaṉakaḷum yāṉē eṉṉum;
ceytu muṉ iṟantavum yāṉē eṉṉum;
ceykaip payaṉ uṉpēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
ceyvārkaḷaic ceyvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum:
ceyya kamalakkaṇṇaṉ ēṟakkolō?
ceyya ulakattīrkku ivai eṉ collukēṉ-
ceyya kaṉivāy ila-māṉ tiṟattē? (V-6-4)

Translation

Says this tender girl with lips like red fruit,
'Tis she that dominates all acts, past, present and future,
And she 'tis that creates the authors of those acts,
And again, 'tis she that enjoys their fruits,
It seems, the Lord of red lotus eyes has into her got;
Of her, what indeed can I tell you, an innocent lot?

Note

The Lord is referred to as the enjoyer of the fruits of all actions which He controls, both the performance and the performers. c.f. śloka IX-24, Bhagavad Gītā, where the Lord has said that it is He that is propitiated by the various acts, rites and rituals. The Nāyakī, possessed by God, speaks as though she is God Not having the faintest idea of this strange malady, the poor, innocent kinsfolk foolishly insist upon having more and more details

tiṟampāmal, maṉ kākkiṉṟēṉ yāṉē eṉṉum,
tiṟampāmal, malai eṭuttēṉē eṉṉum;
tiṟampāmal. acuraraik koṉṟēṉē eṉṉum;
tiṟam kāṭṭi, aṉṟu aivaraik kāttēṉē eṉṉum;
tiṟampāmal. kaṭal kaṭaintēṉē eṉṉum;
tiṟampāta kaṭalvaṇṇaṉ ēṟakkolō?
tiṟampāta ulakattīrkku eṉ collukēṉ-
tiṟampātu eṉ tiru makaḷ eytiṉavē? (V-6-5)

Translation

Declares my darling, 'tis she that justly governs the worlds,
She 'tis that lifted effortlessly mount (Govardan),

acharya.org

Slew the Asuras many unerringly and churned safely the milk-ocean,
Controlled once the military strategy and victory for the five (Pāṇḍavas) secured;
She seems, possessed by the sea-hued Lord of unremitting attention
Unto His devotees; to you, bent upon having all the information,
Oh, worldlings, What can I say of her that is beyond reclamation?

Note

All these deeds performed by the Supreme Lord, from time to time, the Nāyakī, possessed by Him, attributes to herself. How can the worldlings standing ashore comprehend the mysticism of the Nāyakī (Āḻvār), sunk deep in the ocean of Divine consciousness?

iṉa vēy m lai ēntiṉēṉ yāṉē eṉṉum;
iṉa ēṟukaḷ ceṟṟēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
iṉa āṉ-kaṉṟu mēyttēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
iṉa ā-nirai kāttēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
iṉa āyar talaivaṉum yāṉē eṉṉum:
iṉat tēvar talaivaṉ vantu ēṟakkolō?
iṉa vēl-kaṇ nallīrkku ivai eṉ collukēṉ-
iṉa vēl-kaṇṇi eṉ makaḷ uṟṟaṉavē? (V–6–6)

Translation

My spear-eyed daughter avers, 'tis she that lifted
Mount (Govardana) with bamboos profuse, slew the bulls seven,
She is the Cowherd-Chief that tended the calves many
And a multitude of cows: seems possessed by the Lord,
Chief of Celestials; unto you, the spear-eyed dames,
What can I say about my daughter, thus transformed?

Note

The Supreme Lord, Chief of the 'Nitya Sūris' in Heaven, having taken possession of the Nāyakī, she identifies herself

acharya.org

with His incarnation as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as set out above As a little lad, Krsna tended the calves, literally played with them, as one of them and when He came of age, He grazed the cows, a vast multitude, like unto the change-over from, 'Brahmacarya' (bachelorhood) to the next stage of 'Grahasta' (householder)

uṟṟārkaḷ eṉakku illai yārum eṉṉum;
uṟṟārkaḷ eṉakku iṅku ellārum eṉṉum,
uṟṟārkaḷaic ceyvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
uṟṟārkaḷai aḷippēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
uṟṟārkaḷukku uṟṟēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum·
uṟṟārili māyaṉ vantu ēṟakkolō?
uṟṟīrkaṭku eṉ collic collukēṉ yāṉ-
uṟṟu eṉṉuṭaip pētai uraikkiṉṟavē? (V-6-7)

Translation

What indeed can I tell you, my kinsmen?
Says my little one, with vision clear, relatives she has none
And yet, all are related to her, she makes relations
And 'tis she that destroys them too, she is all-in-one
· Unto those that seek her, heart and soul; seems taken in
By the wondrous Lord whom by mere self-effort none can attain?

Notes

(i) The Lord can be said to have no relations, in the sense that the individual souls either stray away from Him and run after minor deities or those that seek Him are not quite conscious of their true inter-relationship. In any case, none has ever attained Him through self-effort alone, without His co-operative grace.

(ii) All are related to the Lord, as they are all His subjects for whom He has great concern and He helps them all, unseen, even though they may not be conscious of this. Even if the subjects propitiate minor deities, He is the ultimate object of adoration, being the Internal Controller of those deities as well.

acharya.org

(iii) The Lord makes relatives in the sense that He attracts the subjects unto Him by exhibiting His charms. He also puts aside those, who are, by dint of their Karma, oblivious of their relationship with Him and are inclined towards minor deities. This is just as bad as destroying their relationship with Him. In a sense, the Lord can also be taken to destroy His devotees, exclusively related to Him, by making them solely absorbed in His beauty, traits and deeds and destroying their sense of individuality. Thus, they get literally lost in Him.

(iv) The Lord is 'All-in-one' and constitutes every conceivable relationship unto those that look upon Him, as the Sole Sustainer. (c.f. Śloka 5 of Stotra Ratna of Saint Yāmuna, where he a ores Saint Nammāḻvār, in this manner)

uraikkiṉṟa mukkaṇ–pirāṉ yāṉē eṉṉum;
uraikkiṉṟa ticaimukaṉ yāṉē eṉṉum;
uraikkiṉṟa amararum yāṉē eṉṉum;
uraikkiṉṟa amarar-kōṉ yāṉē eṉṉum;
uraikkiṉṟa muṉivarum yāṉē eṉṉum:
uraikkiṉṟa mukilavaṇṇaṉ ēṟakkolō?
uraikkiṉṟa ulakattīrkku eṉ collukēṉ-
uraikkiṉṟa eṉ kōmaḷa oṇ koṭikkē? (V–6–8)

Translation

How nice is my tendril-like darling's speech! What can I tell
You worldlings that insist I should about her tell?
Claims she to be Mukkaṭpirāṉ (Śiva) who, some proclaim,
Is the Lord Supreme, as well as Ticaimukaṉ of great fame,
The exalted devas and their eminent chief besides the Sages
Of great renown; Could it be that she stands
Possessed by the redoubted Lord, cloud-hued?

Note

What the Nāyaki brings out here is that the Supreme Lord is the Internal Controller of all, including Śiva, Ticaimukaṉ

acharya.org

(Brahmā), Indra and other celebrities. They just constitute His bodies, in the same way as all other beings and things.

koṭiya viṉai yātum ilaṉē eṉṉum;
koṭiya viṉai āvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
koṭiya viṉai ceyvēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
koṭya viṉai tirppēṉum yāṉē eṉṉum;
koṭiyāṉ ilaṅkai ceṟṟēṉē eṉṉum:
koṭiya puḷ uṭaiyavaṉ ēṟakkolō?
koṭiya ulakattīrkku ivai eṉ collukēṉ-
koṭiyēṉ koti eṉ makal kōlaṅkaḷē? (V–6–9)

Translation

Unto you, importunate worldlings, what can I say
About the antics lovely of this sinner's daughter, like unto a creeper?
Aloof she stands from (the subjects') evil acts, she says
While in evil acts persist (those that do her displeasure incur),
Again, she it is that cures the (devotees') fell sins and passes
Them on to (their opponents) others, 'tis she that reduced to ashes
The felon's Laṅkā; is she by Him possessed who bears
The bird tough (unto His opponents) on His banner?

Note

The sentient and non-sentient beings are the Lord's bodies. He is thus the 'Viśeṣya' or Substance present in all these bodies, known as the 'Viśeṣaṇa', the attributes or modes of the Lord. While the attributes undergo transformations, such as growth and decay, enjoyment and misery, the 'Viśeṣya' undergoes no changes and is 'nirvikāra'. While the 'Jīva' or the individual Soul experiences alternately, weal and woe, the Lord inside the 'Jīva' remains unattached to the fruits of the actions of the Jīva. While the body, the outer cloak of the 'Jīva', is imposed on the latter by dint of its past 'Karma' (acts), the Lord enters the Jīva, as a matter of grace, not bound by the compulsions of a pre-determined factor. Creation actually means that

acharya.org

He makes the non-sentient things undergo the changes of state and endows the individual souls with bodies and sense-organs, thus providing the necessary scope for expansion of their knowledge. The disparities in the created beings, some being happy and others sorrowful, will not, however, render the Lord guilty of partiality and cruelty. The inequalities are the direct results of the actions of the individuals, and their sufferings are intended to chasten them and cure their ills through a cleansing process.

kōlam koḷ cuvarkkamum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kōlam il narakamum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kōlam tikaḷ mōkkamum yāṉe eṉṉum;
kōlam koḷ uyirkaḷum yāṉē eṉṉum;
kōlam koḷ taṉimutal yāṉē eṉṉum·
kōlam koḷ mukilvaṇṇaṉ ēṟakkolō?
kōlam koḷ ulakattīrkku eṉ collukēṉ·
kōlam tikaḷ kōtai eṉ kūnt. lukkē? (V–6–10)

Translation

Says my daughter, she is the cuvarkkam lovely, the dismal hell
And heavenly bliss (mōkkam); the souls with bodies many, at her disposal
She has; the Primordial Force, she also is, with its wonderful potential;
Perhaps, she is by the lovely cloud-hued Lord possessed,
What can I tell unto you people squatting here so well,
About my daughter whose locks are with lovely garland bedecked?

Notes

(i) The Lord dominates every thing, the Svarga, the Hell and the Heaven. The gnostic, whose goal is God, attaches little importance to the Svarga, as, in his eyes, it is no better than hell, the one being a golden fetter and the other, an iron fetter. And yet, the worldlings are enamoured of the pleasures of Svarga and perform austere penances for gaining access to it. It is only from their angle of vision, the Svarga has been qualified by the epithet, lovely, here.

acharya.org

(ii) The 'Mūla-Prakṛti', or the Primordial Force works wonders but even that can function only at the Lord's will. Hence, the Nāyakī, possessed by the Lord, says that she is the Mūla-Prakṛti also.

kūntal malar-maṅkaikkum maṇ-maṭantai ikkum
kula āyar-koḻuntukkum kēḷvaṉ-taṉṉai,
vāynta vaḻuti vaḷa nāṭaṉ, maṉṉu
kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ, kuṟṟēval ceytu,
āynta tamiḻ-mālai āyiṟattul ivaiyum ōr
pattum vallār ulakil
ēntu perum celvattarāyt tirumāl-
aṭiyārkalaip pūcikka nōṟṟārkalē. (V-6-11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
In intimate service of the Consort of (Lakṣmī) the lotus-born
With locks lovely, Dame Earth and (Nappiṉṉai) cream of shepherd clan,
Will, in this world, be blest with the huge wealth of devotion
Unto Tirumāl's votaries, for their due propitiation

Notes

(i) Worship of the Lord's devotees is even more meritorious than worship of the Lord and it is rendered possible only through the Lord's special grace. The influx of the Lord's grace in this regard, is assured to the chanters of this decad.

(ii) Lakṣhmī, the unfailing intercessor between Man and God, unleashes her irresistible physical charms on the Lord, when, in His unbridled independence, He turns a deaf ear to her entreaty to admit unto His fold, the contrite supplicant at His door-step. By virtue of her privileged position, as His beloved spouse, she casts a bewitching spell on Him; enthralled by her ravishing

acharya.org

beauty, He then carries out Her dictates in full. The lovely locks of the Divine Mother of extraordinary fragrance play a very important part indeed, in this context. Hence, the reference to the Divine Mother's lovely locks, in this song.

Fifth Centum—Seventh Decad (V-7)
(Nōṟṟa Nōṉpu)

Preamble

For the nonce, the Āḻvār attempted to sustain himself by impersonating the Lord, even as the damsels of Vṛndāvan did, during that oppressive break in the middle of the rapturous 'Rāsa Krīda'. But there, Lord Kṛṣṇa reappeared in an even more enchanting form than in the earlier session. But here, the Lord is still keeping Himself away from the Āḻvār, although, on the previous occasions, He obliged the Āḻvār with His appearance, mental vision of course, whenever the Āḻvār's longing for such communion was far too intense. Pondering within himself, the Āḻvār apprehends that the Lord might either want him to adopt other means such as karma, Jñāna, Bhakti yogas or intend to give him up on the ground that he was pursuing other means, instead of looking upon Him, as the sole Means. The Āḻvār, therefore, hastens to clarify his true stand at the feet of the Lord, enshrined in Vāṉamāmalai. This pilgrim centre, also known as Cirīvara Maṅkai, Cirīvara Maṅkalam and Nāṅkuṉēri, is deep south in the Tamiḻ Nādu. In each of the various pilgrim centres, the Lord displays one of His numerous auspicious traits prominently. In Vāṉamāmalai (Cirīvaramaṅkalam) shines, with extra-brilliance, the Lord's generosity, whereby He gives out to the devotees seeking Him with single-minded devotion, His very feet as their Sole Refuge. (vide aphorism 163 of Ācārya Hṛdayam).

nōṟṟa nōṉpu ilēṉ; nuṉ-aṟivu ilēṉ; ākilum, iṉi uṉṉai viṭṭu
āṟṟa kiṟkiṉṟilēṉ; aravin aṇai ammāṉē! [oṉṟum
cēṟṟut tāmarai cennel ūṭu malar cirīvaramaṅkalanakar
vīṟṟirunta entāy! uṉakku mikai allēṉ aṅkē. (V–7–1)

acharya.org

Translation

Oh, Lord on serpent-bed, in Cirivaramaṅkalam you graciously reside,
Abounding in paddy fields rich where blooms lotus fine;
Rituals I haven't performed any, while of knowledge acute I am devoid
And yet, even for a while, apart from you I can't remain;
Surely, you can't keep me outside the scope of your protection.

Notes

(i) There was a time when the Āḻvār knew neither his essential nature (Svasvarūpa) nor that of the Supreme Lord. It was but natural that he should have foregone Him while in that state; how could he be made to forego Him even now when he is quite alive to His greatness and his own lowliness? But then, he hasn't pursued any of the well-known paths of discipline, karma yoga or Jñāna yoga or Bhakti yoga. The Āḻvār is, therefore, in the predicament of a hungry person without food, the means of appeasing his hunger. He wants the Lord, as the liberal Benefactor, to feed him looking to his enormous appetite (God-hunger) and he can't think of any other means but the Lord Himself

(ii) Reference to the Lord's serpent—bed (Ādi Śeṣa) in the opening line, is suggestive of the Āḻvār's inordinate longing to serve the Lord, in ever so many ways, like the Ādiśeṣa. Here then is the suggestion to the Lord to enlist the Āḻvār in His service, like Ādiśeṣa.

aṅkuṟṟēṉ allēṉ; iṅkuṟṟēṉ allēṉ; uṉṉaik kāṇum Avāvil vīḻntu [nāṉ
eṅkuṟṟēṉum allēṉ; ilaṅkai ceṟṟa ammāṉē!
tiṅkaḷ cēr maṇi māṭam nīṭu cirīvaramaṅkalanakar uṟai
caṅku cakkarattāy! tamiyēṉukku arulāyē. (V–7–2)

Translation

Neither here nor there nor anywhere else am I,
But to behold you, oh, Sire, Who routed Ilaṅkai! I am sunk

acharya.org

In desire deep; my Lord wielding conch and discus, in Cirīvaramaṅkai,
With spacious streets and castles, stately and shining,
Pray do I unto you to salve this soul forlorn.

Notes

The Āḻvār submits that he does not belong to the happy band of denizens in the high Heavens, enjoying the immortal bliss of perpetual Divine Service nor has he joined the rank and file of the worldlings, following one or the other of the several paths of discipline, calling for personal effort to attain to His feet. There is also no question of his falling in line with the latter category, at least hereafter as he stands enthralled by the Lord's exquisite beauty and is languishing to behold Him, unable to brook separation from Him. Surely, He who routed Laṅkā and reclaimed Sītā, should have no difficulty in rooting the Āḻvār out from 'Samsāra'. Could there be a better recipient of His grace than the Āḻvār who is solely dependent on it?

karuḷap pul-koṭi, cakkarap paṭai, vāṉa nāṭa!
eṉ kārmukil-vaṇṇā!
porul allāta eṉṉaip porulākki atimaikoṇṭāy!
teruḷ koḷ nāṉmaṟai vallavar palar vāḻ cirīvaramaṅkalanakarkku
arul ceytu, aṅku iruntāy! aṟiyēṉ oru kaimmāṟē (V–7–3)

Translation

Oh, Lord of Heaven, on Your banner is Karuḷaṉ and in Your hand
Is the discus valiant, my cloud-hued Lord, mere chaff was I
And yet, You Who gracefully reside in Cirīvaramankai,
Full of Vedic scholars of knowledge chaste, have turned
This dud into Your vassal [hymning Your glory great]
I know not how to recompense You, my Benefactor great.

Note

In between the preceding stanza and this one, there would appear to have ensued a scintillating dialogue between the Lord and the Āḻvār Put briefly, the Āḻvār who prayed in

acharya.org

the last song for the bestowal on Him of the Lord's grace, gets pulled up by Him, saying that there should be due merit in him deserving of His grace The Āḻvār is quick to put the ball back into the Lord's court, by pointing out that He had already enlisted him, a mere dud with no equipment whatever, in His service. Had it not been for His grace galore, the Āḻvār wouldn't be able to render the glorious service (vācika kaiṅkarya) of singing the Tiruvāymoḻi, songs, *par excellence* And so, the Āḻvār prays unto the Lord to go on bestowing His spontaneous grace on him as before, without looking for any merit (Means) in him, in fact, he has none whatsoever, comparable to the end in view, and what little merit there is in him already, has also been implanted by Him only Oh, how gracious is the Supreme Lord of Heaven, obliging the pious and scholarly residents of Vāṟamāmalai with His nectarean presence, in the same way He does unto the denizens of Heaven and how indeed can the Āḻvār recompense Him for His Grace galore!

māṟu cēr patai nūṟṟuvar manka ōr aivarkkuāy, aṉṟu
māyappōr pannı,
nīṟuceyta entāy! nılam kīṇṭa ammāṉē!
tēṟu ñāṉattar vēta vēlvi aṟāc cirīvaramaṅkalanakar
ēṟi vīṟṟiruntāy! uṉṉaı eṅku eytak kūvuvaṉē? (V–7–4)

Translation

The five (brothers) You befriended and had their hundred (cousins) routed,
It was a battle of wonderful strategy, by you directed,
My Lord, the Earth You once salvaged and now have You resorted
To Cirīvaramaṅkalam, inhabited by men of wisdom sound,
Where Vedic rituals go on, all the year round;
You, where and how indeed can I attain?

Notes

(i) In accordance with the Lord's avowed creed, He looks upon all impartially, no one is His foe or His favourite on grounds of caste, culture, beauty and temperament.

acharya.org

And yet, the Lord completely identifies Himself with His lovers, who stand rivetted to Him in thought, word. and deed and He looks upon their enemies as His. That is how, the Kauravas (hundred brothers) who were hostile to the Pāṇḍavas (their five cousins), became His enemies.

(ii) It was a wonderful battle indeed where devious methods were justifiably adopted to quell the wicked opponents. The Lord is known for upholding truth and justice and yet, if He adopted devious methods for outwitting the wicked opponents, it was perfectly justified.

(iii) Even as the Lord condescendingly came down and took His abode in Vāṉamāmalai like the pious ones of sound knowledge, who had already settled there and mingled with them delightfully, the Āḻvār wants the Lord to take the initiative in his case also, that is, He should either come down to him or take him up to His feet, adding to the list of many favours already heaped on him

eytak kūvutal āvatē eṉakku? evva tevvattuḷ āyumāy niṉṟu,
kaitavaṅkaḷ ceyyum karu mēṉi Ammāṉē!
ceyta vēḷviyar vaiyattēvar aṟāc cirīvaramaṅkalanakar
kaitoḻa Irumtāy! atu nāṉum kaṇṭēṉē. (V–7–5)

Translation

Oh, dark-hued Lord, it isn't proper that I make any effort
To attain you; you would with the ungodly mingle and pervert
Their minds and get their brute strength cut out;
Adored by Brahmins who the vedic rituals have put thro',
Reside you do in Cirīvaramaṅkalam, well, I have seen it too.

Notes

(i) *The Lord to the Āḻvār*: "You cry out as if You haven't received any benefit from me; haven't You been shown my Iconic Form in Cirīvaramaṅkai?"

acharya.org

Āḻvār to the Lord: "Sire, I don't deny that, but that is hardly enough for me. I do long for perennial service at Your lotus feet".

Īśvara (God) is the 'Svāmi' (Master) while the Cetana (Jīva, the individual Soul) is the 'Svuṁ' (Property). It is this fundamental relationship that gives rise to the inescapable obligation of the Master in regard to His property, a matter of personal gain for Him indeed. It is against this back-ground that the Āḻvār points out, in this song, the impropriety of the property trying to get at the Master; it should actually be the other way round.

(ii) By sheer eloquence and fallacious arguments, the Lord did, as Buddha, pervert the minds of the ungodly Asuras, bent upon torturing and tormenting others, and beat them back. If these methods did not succeed, He would, in the last resort, mystify them and render them defunct by exhibiting His exquisite charm, vide detailed notes under V-10-4

•

ēṉam āy, nilam kīṇṭa eṉ appaṉē! kaṇṇā! eṉṟum eṉṉai āḷutai
vāṉa nāyakaṉē! maṇi māṇikkaccuṭarē!
tēṉa māmpoḷil taṉ cirīvaramaṅkalattavar kaitoḻa uṟai
vāṉamāmalaiyē! aṭiyēṉ toḻa vantaruḷē. (V–7–6)

Translation

Oh, Lord Vāṉamāmalai, reside you do in cool Cirivaramaṅkai,
Surrounded by mango-orchards with honey in plenty,
And adored by its residents; as the Boar huge You pulled
The Earth out and put it back in its place, my Lord,
Me you have enlisted as Your vassal, oh Lord of heaven,
Radiant like gem and ruby, oh, Kaṇṇā, Pray come down
Unto me here that this vassal may also offer Thee salutation.

Notes

(i) 'Vāṉamāmalai' is alike the name of the Deity and the Pilgrim centre. It means, 'mountain, sky-high'; so very imposing is the Lord's Image there indeed and this description fits in admirably.

acharya.org

(ii) The Lord's incarnations are referred to by the Āḻvār, only to remind the Lord of the basic idea, namely, the elevation of the souls down below. 'Avatāra' means descent and He comes down to push up the subjects, working like a pulley system. The resuscitation of the Earth from under the waters of the Deluge, the Lord assuming the form of a Boar for this purpose, is specially mentioned by the Āḻvār to remind the Lord that he should also be similarly rescued from the bottomless ocean of Samsāra (worldly life).

(iii) The Lord is required to walk down to the Āḻvār's place, for the latter to enjoy His glorious gait.

vantaruḷi eṉ neñcu iṭam koṇṭa vāṉavar koḻuntē! ulakukku ōr
muntait tāy tantaiyē! muḻu ēḻ ulakum uṇṭāy!
centoḻilavar vēta vēḻvi aṟāc cirīvaramaṅkalanakar
antam il pukaḻāy! aṭiyēṉai akaṟṟēlē. (V–7–7)

Translation

Oh, Chief of Celestials, You deigned to come and lodge
In my heart; oh, Primate, You sustained, (during the Deluge),
All the worlds in Your stomach and now Your limitless grace
You do shed in Cirīvaramaṅkai where the pious ones
Of good deeds are in vedic rituals engaged;
Pray, despise not this vassal, my Lord.

Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḻvār longed to see the Lord in His Iconic Form at Vāṉamāmalai, right where he was (inside the hollow of the tamarind tree in Āḻvār Tirunakari temple). But the Lord has not responded yet, giving room for the Āḻvār's apprehension of indifference on His part and hence he prays now that he should not be despised and denied the favour sought by him.

(ii) This song, where the Āḻvār gratefully acknowledges the boundless grace of the Lord of the Celestials in choosing his heart as His habitat, is said to have had a special appeal for Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. He asked his

acharya.org

disciple, Nañcīyar, to recite this song, and, following it up himself in rapturous strain, he observed with great feeling that it was indeed very nice of Saints like Nammāḻvār to have bequeathed such verses of melting tenderness to soften our stony hearts He added that our hearts which are no better than barren rock, rough and rugged, despite the severest course of discipline and austerity, such as 'yama' 'niyama' etc, could be mellowed, tempered and liquefied, only by verses like this Nañcīyar was never tired of relating this incident to his disciples

akaṟṟa nī vaitta māya val aimpulaṉkaḷām-avai naṉku aṟintaṉaṉ,
akaṟṟi eṉṉaiyum nī arum cēṟṟil vīḻttikaṇṭāy-
pakal-katir maṇi māṭam nītu cirīvaramaṅkai vāṇaṉē! eṉṟum
pukaṟku-ariya entāy! pullin vāy pilantāṉē! (V–7–8)

Translation

Well aware am I of the mischief of the senses five,
You have set upon me to keep me aside
And push me back into the fell bog of pleasures sensual,
Oh, Lord, residing in Cirīvaramaṅkai with its castles tall,
You are, my Sire, ever beyond reach
(Of the ungodly), oh, you who tore off the demoniac bird's beak!

Note

The Āḻvār pleaded, in the preceding song, that He should not be despised by the Lord and made to drift away from Him. The Lord, who had endowed the Āḻvār with perfect knowledge of the Divine, could not, however, appreciate the basis of the Āḻvār's complaint The Āḻvār makes his position abundantly clear in this song Situated as he is, in this land of nescience, open to the hazards of succumbing to the mischief of the senses, he is afraid of untoward developments, despite all the knowledge imparted to him by the Lord. The Āḻvār, therefore, prays that he be untethered from the present moorings, so as to eliminate the possible risk of contamination, even as He tore off Bakāsura's (the demoniac bird's) beak.

acharya.org

puḷḷiṉ vāy piḷantāy! marutu iṭai pōyiṉāy! erutu ēḷ aṭartta eṉ
kaḷḷa māyavaṉē! karumāṇikkac cuṭarē!
teḷḷiyār tiru nāṉmaṟaikaḷ vallār mali taṉ cirīvaramaṅkai-
yuḷ irunta entāy! aruḷāy uyyumāṟu-eṉakkē. (V–7–9)

Translation

My Lord, staying in cool Cirīvaramaṅkai where do dwell
Many a vedic scholar with knowledge sound! You tamed the bulls,
Wondrous and tricky, the bird's beak You did pull and quell,
'Tween the twin trees You crawled, oh Sire of sapphire hue!'
Pray let me know the means of attaining You.

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār laid two charges at the Lord's door, namely, (i) he had been kept away from the Lord and (ii) he got bogged down in the difficult terrain of samsāra. The Lord sent a feeler round, suggesting that it was due to his past sins he was in that predicament, to which this song is the rejoinder. Surely, the Āḻvār's sins were not as tough as the evil forces referred to in this song, which the Lord destroyed effortlessly. Removal of the so-called impediment, in the case of the Āḻvār, was so very trivial that the Lord should not hesitate to cut it out and enable the Āḻvār to render service at the Lord's feet, even as the pious Vaiṣṇavas of Vāṉamāmalai, with blemishless knowlege, do.

āṟu eṉakku niṉ pātamē caraṇ ākat tantoḻintāy; uṉakku ōrkaim-
māṟu nāṉ oṉṟu ilēṉ; eṉatu āviyum uṉatē-
cēṟu koḷ karumpum perum cennelum mali taṉ cirīvaramaṅkai
nāṟu pūn taṉ-tuḷāy muṭiyāy! teyva-nāyakaṉē! (V–7–10)

Translation

Oh, Teyvanāyakā, You wear on Your crown tuḷaci garland of fragrance sweet
And grace cool cirīvaramaṅkai, with paddy and sugarcane in plenty;

acharya.org

As my sole refuge, You have unto me vouchsafed Your lovely feet;
How indeed can I repay You for this gracious bounty?
Even my soul is Yours and there's nothing I can unto you offer

Notes

(i) 'Teivanāyakaṉ is the name of the Deity, enshrined in Vāṉamāmalai, meaning the overlord of all godlings, the Supreme Lord

(ii) This decad began by emphasising the resourcelessness of the Āḻvār, that is, absence of any means other than the Lord Himself (ākiñcanya) And now, in this concluding song, the Āḻvār compliments himself on the strength of his conviction that the Lord is at once the Means and the End and that the Lord's lovely feet, the ultimate destination, constitute the Means as well, his sole refuge. Giving up the means which have śāstraic backing and desisting from the pursuit of the prescribed paths of discipline, should not, however, be construed as being tantamount to atheism or loss of faith in the sanctity of the Scriptures. The point driven home here is the Āḻvār's robust faith and love in the Supreme Lord as the Means and the End, rolled into one, and sticking to Him exclusively. This is like Service unto the Lord taking precedence over the daily rituals enjoined by the Śāstras. No harm will accrue to the Subject by skipping over the rituals, in this particular context, even as the snake-charmer, armed with the requisite herbal antidote, inserts his hand into the viper's mouth with impunity. Any other person, not so equipped, will meet certain death, if he ventures to take liberties with the poisonous snake; likewise, it will be grievously wrong to give up the religious pursuits enjoined by the Śāstras, when not actually engaged in Divine Service.

(iii) Aphorism 19 of "Ācārya hṛdayam" succinctly brings out the difference between those who pin their faith to the eight-syllabled 'Tirumantra', inculcating a sense of total surrender to His grace and complete subservience

acharya.org

to the Lord as His eternal vassal and those guided by other texts. The latter category (Śāstrajñas, well-versed in Śāstras) can be likened to those trying to swim across deep waters, clinging to an inflated tube or raft with one hand and oaring with the other-a combination of the light obtained from the Śāstras with their own individual effort. The former category is like unto those seated on the cross planks of a boat (the Lord's grace) launched into the waters, eagerly looking forward to reaching the shore, thus depending entirely on the Lord's grace, with no effort of their own.

(iv) Called upon by the Lord to offer unto Him whatever the Āḻvār deems proper by way of expressing his gratitude to Him for sustaining in him such a strong conviction, the Āḻvār submits that there is nothing of his own to offer and even his soul actually belongs to Him. The Āḻvār says: "How can this insignificant self pay you back, the overlord of the exalted Devas? You are the incessant Benefactor and You are so full, above wants of any kind, that you need hardly anything from me. While there are those who care not for your favours and engage themselves in mad pursuit of food and raiment, there are also the silly brats who fancy that they have requited you for favours received at your hands"

teyva-nāyakaṉ, nāraṇaṉ, tirivikkiramaṉ aṭi-ṇaimicai
koy koḷ pūm poḷil cūḻ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
ceyta āyirattuḷ ivai taṉ cirīvaramaṅkai mēya pattuṭaṉ
vaikal pāṭa vallār vaṉōrkku ārā-amutē. (V–7–11)

Translation

Those that zealously chant, with no break, these songs ten,
Which unto the Lord of Cirīvaramaṅkai pertain,
Out of the thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, adorned by many a flower garden,

acharya.org

Adoring the feet of Tiruvikkiraman, the Lord Supreme,
Will unto Celestials be delectable like insatiable cream.

Note

Those that enter into the spirit of these ten songs, highlighting the Lord's boundless love for His devotees, whose reclamation is indeed His gain and His readiness to offer them His very feet, as their sole refuge (vide-V-7-10, the key-song), will indeed be highly delectable to the Nitya Sūris in Heaven.

Fifth Centum--Eighth Decad (V-8)
(Ārā-amutē)

Preamble

Despite the Āḻvār's intense longing for communion with the Lord enshrined in Vāṉamāmalai, at whose feet he fell like an uprooted tree and sought refuge, he was not favoured with the Lord's presence. The Āḻvār now turns his attention to the Lord gracing Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakonam in Tamiḻnādu), hoping that He might be intending to grant him audience at that centre. The Āḻvār is contemplating with all the fervour at his command, the enchanting prospect of the Lord casting His sweet glances at him, conversing with him and gathering him up to His bosom, in sweet embrace. Akrūra was also in such a happy reminiscent mood during his journey to Vrindāvan to fetch Kṛṣṇa to Kamsa's court. Whereas Akrūra had his ambition duly fulfilled, the Āḻvār has once again met with disappointment, like Bharata who could not prevail over Śrī Rāma to get back to Ayodhya from exile. Depressed like the babe, wanting to suck milk from the mother's breast, being denied access by the mother, the Āḻvār ends this decad on a despondent note, exclaiming that he just doesn't know how many more pilgrim centres he has still to knock at in this manner.

ārā-amutē! aṭiyēṉ uṭalam niṉpāl aṉpāyē,
nīrāy alaintu, karaiya urukkukiṉṟa neṭumālē!
cīr ār cennel kavari vīcum ceḻu nīrt tirukkuṭantai
ēr ār kōlam tikaḻak kiṭantāy! kaṇṭēṉ, emmāṉē! (V-8-1)

acharya.org

Translation

Oh, non-satiate Nectar, Your form enchanting does enthral
And thaw my body down; in Tirukkuṭantai, the land fertile,
With bracing climate, paddy fields rich and plenty of water,
I've seen you reclining, my Lord, sweet indeed are you beyond measure.

Notes

(i) This decad which opens by addressing the Lord as 'non-satiate Nectar', has always had a special fascination for the great Ācāryas of yore The Supreme Lord is an inexhaustible fountain of bliss and it was but meet that Nammāḷvār addressed the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai as above. All the same, this appellation sounded unique unto one Lōkaśāraṅga mahāmuni who lived in North India. When he enquired of a sojourner from South India as to whether there was any special news from the South, the latter said that, in that part of the country, people were chanting Saint Nammāḷvār's Tiruvāymoḷi. When called upon by the Mahāmuni to cite a verse from the said work, the traveller said that he knew but one phrase, namely, "Ārā Amutē!" (non-satiate Nectar!). On hearing this sweet epithet, the Mahāmuni exlcaimed "What! do they have an epithet like this also, when there are several others such as Nārāyaṇa etc.?" So saying, there and then, the Mahāmuni left for the holy land where this grand epithet of the Lord was current.

(ii) It is noteworthy that the Lord's enthralling Form at Tirukkuṭantai makes even the Āḷvār's body which is non-sentient, melt down in ecstasy, competing, as it were, with the Soul inside. Even as He is reclining on the Serpent-bed with eyes closed, it is very enchanting and one would want to enjoy it all the time. This is in dire contrast to us, humans, who present a trim appearance when we are up and moving, while, during sleep, we look very awkward indeed.

acharya.org

emmāṉē! eṉ veḷḷai-mūrtti! eṉṉai āḷvāṉē!
em mā uruvum vēṇṭum āṟṟāl āvāy! eḷil ēṟē!
cem mā kamalam ceḷu nīrmicaikkaṇ malarum tirukkuṭantai
am mā malarkkaṇ vaḷarkiṉṟāṉē! eṉ nāṉ ceykēṉē! (V-8-2)

Translation

You are the immaculate One that made me Your vassal,
Oh, charming Lord, assume You do any Form at Your sweet will;
In Tirukkuṭantai red lotus flower large blooms everywhere,
But You repose with Your lotus eyes closed, how can I endure?

Note

The Āḷvār sees the red lotus flowers in full bloom in the ponds of Tirukkutantai But the lotus-eyed Lord doesn't open His eyes yet and greet the Āḷvār with sweet glances. This is more than the Āḷvār can bear. The Saint would expect quite a lot of favours from the Lord besides those already heaped on him. Although the Lord, in His iconic Form, does not, as a rule, open His mouth and speak or embrace the yearning devotee, yet the Āḷvār would want Him to make an exception in his case. If He could at least open His lotus eyes and look at the Āḷvār, it would be some consolation for the latter Otherwise, the Āḷvār cannot sustain himself. In the ponds, where the lotus flowers are in full bloom, the bees are feeding themselves snmptuously with honey but here is a bee (Āḷvār) languishing without food because the Lord's lotus-eyes still remain closed

eṉ nāṉ ceykēṉ? yārē kaḷaikaṇ? eṉṉai eṉ ceykiṉṟāy?
uṉṉāl allāl yāvarālum oṉṟum kuṟai vēṇṭēṉ;
kaṉ ār matiḷ cūḷ kuṭantaik kiṭantāy! aṭiyēṉ aru vāḷnāḷ
cel nāḷ en nāḷ? an nāḷ uṉa tāḷ piṭittē celakkāṇē (V-8-3)

Translation

Oh, Lord, reposing in Kutantai with parapet walls artistic,
What can I do and who shall my protector be?
What indeed do You propose to do with me?

acharya.org

Means other than You I crave not; pray let me stick
Unto Your feet during the days this vassal is still to eke.

Note

Finding the Lord unmoved by his ardent entreaties, the Āḻvār apprehends that the Lord expects him to fall back on other means and, therefore, puts the Lord the triple questions spelt out in lines 2 and 3 of this stanza. In essence, the Āḻvār asks the Lord whether He expects him to fend for himself or run after some one else seeking protection, or He would do the job Himself. Side by side, he has also clarified his position beyond any manner of doubt, namely, he has no other means but the Lord Himself. The Āḻvār's stand has been discussed threadbare in aphorism 46 of Śrīvacana Bhūṣaṇa against this particular background. It is reproduced below:

No doubt, the Lord had endowed the Āḻvār with supreme knowledge and yet, it was that very knowledge that stood in the way of his adopting any other means for attaining Him, as it would come into conflict with his essential nature as the Lord's vassal, solely dependent on Him Even if he could overlook this basic objection and pursue other paths of discipline, the knowledge bestowed on him by the Supreme Lord was saturated with God-love (Bhakti)—intellectual love of God. It is this God-love that threw the Āḻvār into a state of ecstasy, precluding recourse to any means other than the Lord Himself, which would demand steady and constant physical and mental exercise

celak kāṇkiṟpār kaṇum aḻavum cellum kīrttiyāy!
ulappu ilāṉē! ellā ulakum uṭaiya oru mūrtti!
nalattāl mikkār kuṭantaik kiṭantāy! uṉṉaik kāṇpāṉ, nāṉ
alappu āy, ākācattai nōkki, aḻuvaṉ; toḻuvaṉē. (V–8–4)

Translation

Oh, peerless Lord of all the worlds, Your traits auspicious soar
As high as one can see and even beyond, without end;

acharya.org

To behold Thee reposing in Kuṭantai where men of piety galore
Do dwell, I look at the sky, weep and in worship bend.

Note

The Āḻvār does not seek out the Lord in Heaven or in the Milky-ocean but the One in nearby Tirukkuṭantai. Seeing the Lord connotes not merely seeing His Form, as others do, but conversing with and embracing Him. The Āḻvār is gazing at the sky, hoping that the Lord would drop down, from above, as He did, to rescue Gajendra, the elephant in distress. The Āḻvār weeps like a child and worships like elders.

Aḻuvaṉ; toḻuvaṉ; āṭik kāṇpaṉ; pāṭi alaṟṟuvaṉ;
taḻu valviṉaiyāl pakkam nōkki, nāṇik kaviḻntiruppaṉ;
ceḻu oṉ paḻaṉak kuṭantaik kiṭantāy! centāmaraik kaṇṇā!
toḻuvaṉēṉai uṉa tāḷ cērumvakaiyē cūḻkaṇṭāy (V–8–5)

Translation

My Lord, with red lotus-eyes, in Kuṭantai, rich and fertile,
You repose; I do cry, worship, sing, dance and prattle,
Feeling shy, my head I bend and enveloped in heavy sins,
I look for You in different directions; the ways and means
You should concert so that Your feet I do attain

Notes

(i) The Āḻvar says that he has tried all methods at his disposal to induce the Lord's response, but in vain The young ones cry out their needs and get them while the knowledgeable elders achieve their purpose through worship; the Āḻvār has tried both these methods It is now up to the Lord to take him on to His feet

(ii) The sins, referred to here, connote the Āḻvār's God-love remaining unreciprocated by the Lord.

cūḻkaṇṭāy eṉ tollai viṉaiyai aṟuttu; uṉ aṭicērum
ūḻ kaṇṭiruntē, tūrākkuḻi tūrttu, eṉai nāḷ akaṉṟu iruppaṉ?
vāḻ tol pukaḻār kuṭantaik kiṭantāy! vāṉōr kōmāṉē!
yāḻiṉ icaiyē! amutē! aṟiviṉ payaṉē! ariēṟē! (V–8–6)

acharya.org

Translation

Reposing in Kuṭantai of hoary fame, oh, Chief of Celestials,
You are the sweet strain from the lyre and delectable
Like nectar, the end of all knowledge You are, and grand
Like the lion and the bull; I am unto Your feet bound,
I know and yet sense-buried am I; from You apart
How long can I be? I pray unto You to cut out
My sins hoary and poor me unto Your fold admit.

Note

The Lord is unto the Āḻvār, the sum total of all things delicious, and he prays that the Lord should cut out the sins of one so deeply absorbed in Him, even as He did in the case of the chaste ones worshipping Him in Tirukkutantai. The ultimate aim of knowledge is to secure happiness and: the Lord is happiness itself.

ariēṟē! eṉ am poṉ-cuṭarē! ceṅkaṇ karu mukilē!
eri ēy pavaḷak kuṉṟē! nāl tōl entāy! uṉatu aruḷē
piriyā aṭimai eṉṉaik koṇṭāy! kuṭantait tirumālē!
tariyēṉ; iṉi uṉ caraṇam tantu, eṉ caṉmam kaḷaiyāyē.
(V–8–7)

Translation

My Lord of shoulders four, you stand
Like a coral mount, stellar-bound,
The golden beam lovely, oh, best of lions,
A blue mount you are, with red eyes lovely; by your grace,
You did enlist me in your service,
Oh, Sire, residing in Kuṭantai, no longer can I be apart
From you, pray cut out this body and grant me your feet.

Note

The Āḻvār's complaint is that, even after having induced in him God-love of such a high order, the Lord has kept him in this material body, instead of lifting him up to His feet. In nearby Kuṭantai, the Lord and His Divine Consort are gracing the votaries, enlisting them in Divine Service. Is it not odd that the Āḻvār should languish like a child, dying

acharya.org

of hunger, right at the feet of the parents, rich and bounteous? The Āḻvār prays that he be granted the Lord's feet so that his body (earthly existence) may be cut out even as the babes are fed on the mother's breast prior to surgical treatment.

kaḻaivāy tuṉpam; kalaiyātu oḻivāy; kaḻaikaṉ maṟṟu ilēṉ,
vaḻai vāy nēmip paṭaiyāy! kuṭantaik kitanta mā māyā!
taḻarā uṭalam, eṉatu āvi carintu pōmpōtu
iḻaiyātu uṉa tāl oruṅkap piṭittup pōta icai niyē (V–8–8)

Translation

My wondrous Lord, reposing in Kutantai, when life ebbs out
Of my body worn out, let me by you be blest.
Oh, wielder of the discus lovely, with its mouth bent!
That I relax not my hold on your feet; whether or not
You do my miseries cut out, other than you I've no resort

Notes

(i) The 'Prapanna', pursuing the path of loving surrender to the Lord's spontaneous grace, has to invoke the Lord's grace as the sole saviour, for deliverance from all ills and evils, he shall not knock at any door other than His, whatever be the provocation Whether the Lord fulfils His part of the obligation or not, the Āḻvār will not budge from his avowed stand

(ii) Why should the Lord not cut out the Āḻvār's ills despite His holding the discus, ever ready for going into action? This seems to be the Āḻvār's idea in referring to the Discus in the Lord's hand.

(iii) What indeed is the purpose of the Lord's manifestation in His iconic Form at Tirukkuṭantai, if not to cure the ills and evils of devotees like the Āḻvār? The Āḻvār invokes the Lord's grace, so that he may remain steadfast unto Him.

acharya.org

icaivittu eṉṉai uṉ tāḷ-iṇaikkīḻ iruttum ammāṉē!
acaivu il amarar talaivar talaivā! ātip peru mūrtti!
ticai vil vīcum ceḻu mā maṇikaḷ cērum tirukkuṭantai
acaivu il ulakam paravak kiṭantāy! kāṇa vārāyē. (V–8–9)

Translation

Chief Supreme of the eternal heroes in Heaven! Oh, primordial Lord,
Strayed I from You for long but unto Your feet, oh, Sire,
You have fathered me, inducing in me the desire therefor;
Reposing without break in Tirukkuṭantai where muster gems rare
And you are by the whole world adored,
Pray come down, my Lord, for me to behold.

Notes

(i) It is all due to the Lord's grace and age-long effort that the straying individual is brought round and made to submit to the Lord's protection, giving up all notions of self-ownership and self-protection. Having generated in the Āḻvār God-love of such great magnitude, the Lord should naturally follow it up by obliging Him with His presence. Having seen the Lord in repose, the Āḻvār now wants to behold and enjoy the Lord's majestic gait.

(ii) The lustrous gems assembled in Tirukkuṭantai obviously refer to luminaries like Tirumaḻisai Āḻvār.

vārā aruvāy varum eṉ māyā! māyā mūrttiyāy!
ārā amutāy! aṭiyēṉ āvi akamē tittippāy!
tīrā viṇaikaḷ tīra eṉṉai āṇṭāy! tirukkuṭantai
ūrāy! uṉakku āḷ-paṭṭum aṭiyēṉ iṉṉam uḻalvēṉō? (V–8–10)

Translation

My wondrous Lord of supernal Form, formless You stay in my mind
And sweeten it but Your insatiable Form alluring,
You won't unto me show; sins beyond cure
You destroyed and me, as Your vassal, did bind;

acharya.org

Oh, Lord, holding sway over Tirukkuṭantai,
Even as Your vassal, suffer still should I?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār who was fondly hoping to enjoy the resplendent form of the Lord enshrined at Tirukkuṭantai, feels frustrated, as the Lord didn't come up to him and reveal His alluring Form, insatiable The Āḻvār, therefore, asks the Lord whether He intends that he should knock at many more pilgrim centres.

(ii) When the Āḻvār addressed the Lord as 'Insatiable Nectar', it is not a mere vocal exercise; it goes right to the interior of his heart and sweetens it

uḷalai eṉpil pēyoci mulaiyūṭu avaḷai uyir uṇṭāṉ
kaḷalkaḷ avaiyē caraṇ ākak koṇṭa kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
kuḷaliṉ maliyac coṉṉa ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattum
maḷalai tīra vallār kāmar māṉ ēy nōkkiyarkkē. (V-8-11)

Translation

Those that thoroughly earn these songs ten;
Out of the thousand, sweeter than flute, composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ
Who sought refuge at the feet of the Lord Who sucked
The tough-boned devil's life out of her breast, will be liked
By the doe-eyed damsels as their lovers dear

Note

This end-stanza reveals that those who learn this decad throughly, will unto the Lord's devotees be as dear as the erotic lovers are unto their suitors. The doe-eyed damsels, obviously, refer to the Apsarās in Heaven, beyond the mischief of sensuality. The Āḻvār's intention could only be as explained above, as he is not the one to hark back to the domain of sensual pleasures. What is said in this stanza is a mere simile, not to be taken literally but applied to God and the Godly who would feel attracted to the chanters of this Tiruvāymoḷi.

acharya.org

Fifth Centum - Ninth Decad (V-9)
(Mān ēy nōkku)

Preamble

A frustrated Āḻvār turns his attention on yet another pilgrim centre, named Tiruvallavāḻ (in Kerala), the coveted communion with the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai not having materialised. Even so, he couldn't get there, being obsessed with the fragrance wafted across from there along with the breeze, the musical drone of the bees humming in the orchards over there, the vedic chantings etc. Thus stranded, *en route*, the Āḻvār assumes the state of Nāyaki who speaks out her infatuation to her mates. Of course, it is all mental experience and no physical movement, as such, is involved.

māṉ ēy nōkku nallīr! vaikalum viṉaiyēṉ meliya,
vāṉ ār vaṉ kamukum, matu mallikai kamaḻum
tēṉ ār cōlaikaḻ cūḻ tiru vallavāḻ uṟaiyum
kōṉārai aṭiyēṉ aṭikūṭuvatu eṉṟukolō? (V–9–1)

Translation

Ye, doe-eyed ladies, when will this vassal be blest to join
The Lord in Tiruvallavāḻ, with its orchards holding honey in in plenty,
Where stand arecanut trees sky-high and jasmine sheds honey
And throws forward its fragrance fine, making this sinner thin down?

eṉṟukol-tōḻimīrkāḻ! emmai nīr nalintu eṉ ceytīrō?
poṉ-tikaḻ puṉṉai, makiḻ, putu mātavi mītu aṇavi,
teṉṟal maṇam kamaḻum tiruvallavāḻ nakaruḻ
niṉṟa pirāṉ aṭiniṟu aṭiyōm koṇṭu cūṭuvatē? (V–9–2)

Translation

Ye, mates, does your tormenting me make any sense?
My mind is unto the Lord drawn, who in Tiruvallavāḻ stays
Where the southerly breeze does the fragrance sweet convey

acharya.org

From posh puṉṉai trees and their attractive kind;
When shall the dust from His feet anoint us indeed?

Notes

(i) The mates who were critical of the Nāyaki's attitude are reprimanded by her. She says that her mind is attracted by the Lord in Tiruvallavāḷ through the fragranc wafted from there Having known her as well as they do they would do well to smear her head with the dust from the Lord's feet instead of trying to pull her back.

(ii) The Āḷvār's special fascination for the trees etc., in Tiruvallavāḷ, only typifies the great love and esteem in which the devout hold the several Pilgrim Centres where the Lord lovingly stays for the reclamation of His subjects. Their deep faith is reflected in their belief that the trees etc, in these centres, are but the angels of Heaven transplanted here and that this sportive Universe (Līla vibhūti) itself is but the garden lovingly raised by the Lord and His Divine Consort as a pastime. That was why one Jananātha Brahma Rāyar *alias* Allalapperumāl was pulled up by Śrī Empār when the former attempted to fell down trees in holy Śrīraṅgam, Empār is said to have questioned the Rāyar whether he intended to take liberties with the Lord's garden (Īśvara vibhūti)

cūṭu malarkkuḻalīr! tuyarāṭṭiyēṉ meliya,
pāṭum nal vēta oli paravait tirai pōl muḻaṅka,
māṭu uyarntu ōmap pukai kamaḻum taṉ tiruvallavāḻ
nīṭu uṟaikiṉṟa pirāṉ kaḻal kāṇṭumkol niccalumē? (V-9-3)

Translation

You, ladies, having tresses with flowers bedecked.
When can I, for ever, behold the feet of my Lord,
In cool Tiruvallavāḻ amid holy fires that send
Fumes sky-high and vedic chantings that resound
Like the billows of the sea, thinning this miserable one down?

acharya.org

Note

The mates, happily bedecked with flowers on their long locks, would expect the Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī to fall in line with them. But the Nāyakī is inclined otherwise; drawn towards Tiruvallavāḷ, with its sacred setting as above, she longs to behold the Lord's feet there for ever and anon. If the mates can tell her when and how she can realise her ambition, well and good; otherwise, they would do well to desist from criticising and pulling her up.

niccalum tōḻimīrkāḷ! emmai nīr naḷintu eṉ ceytīrō?
paccilai niḻ kamukum, palavum, teṅkum, vāḻaikaḷum,
maccu aṇi māṭaṅkaḷ mītu aṇavum taṉ tiruvallavāḷ
naccu araviṉ aṇaimēl nampirāṉatu nal nalamē. (V–9–4)

Ye, mates, what do you gain by teasing me always?
Know ye, my good soul unto the Lord belongs, Who does repose
On serpent-bed and stays now in Tiruvallavāḷ, cool and nice,
With arecanut trees, green and tall, the plantains,
Jack and cocoanut trees hanging over the huge mansions

Note

The Nāyakī tells her mates point-blank that she belongs to the Lord in Tiruvallavāḷ with its enchanting scenery and is, therefore, not free to respond to their wishes. It is no use trying to veer her round to their way of thinking and all their attempts will only prove futile. It was by revealing the charming setting in which He reposed on Ādiśeṣa (Serpent-bed) that the Lord initially attracted the Āḻvār. Therefore it is the Nāyakī pines for intimate service unto the Lord, emulating Ādi-Śeṣa.;

nal nalat tōḻimīrkāḷ! nalla antaṇar vēḷvip pukai
main nalam koṇṭu uyar viṉ maṟaikkum taṉ tiruvallavāḷ
kaṇṇal am kaṭṭi-taṇṇai, kaṇiyai, iṉ amutam-taṇṇai,
eṉ nalam koḷ cuṭarai, eṉṟukol kaṅkaḷ kāṇpatuvē? (V–9–5)

acharya.org

Translation

My wholesome mates, when can I, the radiant Lord behold,
The candy flawless, the nectar, the fruit delicious, Who stole
My all, staying in cool Tiruvallavāḷ, where go up dense fumes, inky,
From the holy fires of vedic brahmins and hide the sky?

Note

Unlike the Mother and other elders who cannot see eye to eye with the Nāyakī, the mates know her mind well enough, although, now and then, they too try to get her round, seeing her extremely critical condition. That is why the Nāyakī finds the mates friendly and addresses them as such. She would want them to tell her when she could behold the Lord in Tiruvallavāḷ of ravishing charm in that highly delectable setting The nectar obtained long back by churning the ocean (treated lightly by our Ācāryas as mere salt-extract) pales into insignificance, in comparison with the soul-stirring, soul-elevating Nectar, the Lord is unto the Nāyakī.

kāṇpatu eññāṉṟukolō viṉaiyēṉ-kaṉivāy maṭavīr!
pāṇ kural vaṇṭinoṭu pacun teṉṟalum āki, eṅkum
cēṇ ciṉai ōṅku marac ceḻuṅ kāṉal-tiruvallavāḷ
māṇ kuṟaḷ kōlap pirāṉ malart tāmaraip pātaṅkaḷē? (V-9-6)

Translation

Ye, charming mates, When can this sinner behold
The lotus feet of the lovely Midget Who has His abode
In Tiruvallavāḷ on the seashore, fall of orchards fine,
Where plays all over cool, southerly breeze and tuneful bees drone.

Note

Although the Lord stays in this holy place as vāmana of bewitching beauty, with a happy blend of beauty and bounty (easy accessibility), yet His feet hold out a special charm to the Nāyakī who covets the lovely pair all the time, repeatedly mentioning them song after song.

acharya.org

pātaṅkaḷmēl aṇi pūn toḻak kūṭuṅkol-pāvai naḷḷīr!
ōta neṭun taṭattuḷ uyar tāmarai, ceṅkaḷunīr,
mātarkaḷ vāḻ-mukamum kaṇṇum ēntum tiruvallavāḷ
nātaṉ, iñ ñālam uṇṭa nam pirāṉ-taṉṉai nāḷtoṟumē? (V–9–7)

Translation

Ye, charming mates, shall I worship daily the flowers at the feet
Of the benefactor great, who the worlds sustained during deluge
And now presides over Tiruvallavāḷ where the ponds huge
Are studded with flowers fine and the women wear faces bright?

Notes

(i) The bright faces and bewitching eyes of the womenfolk compete with the high class flowers in the ponds, lotus etc., and it is hardly possible to distinguish the one from the other

(ii) The Lord's sustenance of the worlds, during the Deluge, is not merely a matter of past history but one of personal experience of the Āḻvār who has been redeemed by the Lord from the deluge of 'Samsāra' and elevated to the present pitch of devotion

nāḷtoṟum vītu iṉṟiyē toḻak kūṭuṅkol-naḷ-nutaḷīr!
āṭu uṟu tiṅ karumpum viḷai cennelum āki eṅkum
māṭu uṟu pūn taṭam cēr vayal cūḻ taṉ tiruvallavāḷ
nīṭu uṟaikiṉṟa pirāṉ nilam tāviya nīḷ kaḻalē? (V–9–8)

Translation

Ye, mates with foreheads bright, shall I worship for ever
The feet of the Lord Who the worlds once spanned and now resides
In cool Tiruvallavāḷ with sweet sugar canes all over,
Ponds packed with flowers lovely and rich paddy fields alongside?

Notes

(i) Reference to the bright foreheads of the mates is but wishful thinking on the part of the Nāyakī who expects the Lord in Tiruvallavāḷ to come down where

acharya.org

she is, through the good offices of the mates On the Lord's arrival the faces of the mates will naturally brighten up by way of expressing their gratitude to Him.

(ii) The Nāyakī pines for the continual worship of the feel of the Lord of loving condescension gracing Tiruvallavāḷ, cool and exhilarating

kaḷal vaḷai pūrippa yām kaṇṭu kaitoḷak kūtunkolō-
kuḷal eṉṉa, yāḷum eṉṉa, kuḷir cōlaiyuḷ tēṉ arunti
maḷalai vari vaṇṭukaḷ icai pātum tiruvallavaḷ
cuḷaliṉ mali cakkarap perumāṉatu tol aruḷē? (V–9–9)

Translation ;

Will the Lord, wielding the discus dynamic, shed His grace natural.
For me to joyously behold, with bangles well set and adore Him
That stays in Tiruvallavāḷ where pretty bees hum
Like flute or lyre, fed on honey from the orchards cool?

Note

The Nāyakī invokes the Lord's spontaneous grace for her to behold Him with great joy, her bangles well set on her wrist in the process and continually adore Him

tol aruḷ nal viṉaiyāl colak kūtuṅkol-tōḷimīrkāḷ!
tol aruḷ maṇṇum viṇṇum toḷa niṉṟa tirunakaram
nal aruḷ āyiravar nalaṉ ēntum tiruvallavāḷ
nal aruḷ nam perumāṉ nārāyaṇaṉ nāmaṅkalē? (V–9–10)

Translation

Ye, mates, shall Nārāyaṇaṉ's grace inborn on us descend
That we may His holy names recite? By His grace grand
He resides in gracious Tiruvallavāḷ, by Heaven and Earth adored,
Where thousands of brahmins, pious and gracious, have their abode.

acharya.org

Notes

(i) Tiruvallavāḷ is described here as the city of grace, adored alike by those on Earth and in Heavn. Actually, this description holds good in respect of all the pilgrim centes on Earth, where the Lord of limitless grace makes Himself visible and easily accessible to one and all, in His iconic (worshippable) Form, adored best of all His five manifestations.

(ii) Tender solicitude for His subjects is a remarkable trait of Lord Nārāyaṇa; the pious inhabitants of Tiruvallavāḷ are even more solicitous than the Lord,of the welfare of mankind and its uplift.

nāmaṅkaḷ āyiram uṭaiya nam perumāṉ aṭimēl
cēmam koḷ teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ terintu uraitta
nāmaṅkaḷ āyirattuḷ ivai pattum tiruvallavāḷ
cēmam koḷ teṉ nakarmēl ceppuvār ciṟantār piṟantē. (V–9–11)

Translation

Those that can recite these songs ten, which laud
The glory of Tiruvallavāḷ, the walled city lovely,
Out of the thousand of Caṭakōpaṉ of Teṉkurukūr, well-laid,
Adoring the feet of the Lord with thousand names holy,
Will gain fame and distinction, though born in this land.

Note

Those that recite this decad will indeed gain fame and distinction, not attainable by other householders. They will not suffer from the disability the Āḷvār suffered and they can thus freely move round and visit the pilgrim centres. The thousand names (Sahasranāma), which actually connote not a mere thousand names but many more without number, depict the auspicious traits and glorious deeds of the Lord. The thousand songs composed by the Āḷvār who considers the Lord's feet as his sole Refuge also reflect the glory of His traits and deeds

acharya.org

Fifth Centum- Tenth Decad (V-10)
(Piṟanta āṟum)

Preamble

Unable to reach the holy place of Tiruvallavāḷ, the Āḷvār contemplated the Lord enshrined there, from the outskirts of the holy city, as we saw in the last decad. The Saint thought, he would sustain himself by meditating on Lord Govinda's (Kṛṣṇa's) auspicious traits but it made him thaw down. And so, he prays unto the Lord in this decad to grant him at least the stamina to contemplate His glory and sustain himself, even if He would not oblige him with His company. For this purpose, he turns to the Lord in His Incarnate Form (Vibhava), having failed to realise his longing for communion with the Lord in His Arca (iconic) Form, in successive pilgrim centres

On the face of it, the Āḷvār would appear to be moving in the reverse gear. The Lord's Arca (Workshippable) Form is intended to overcome the formidable handicaps and obstacles that confront one in worshipping Him in any of His other aspects of 'Para' 'Vyūha', Vibhava' and 'Antaryāmi' And yet, the Alvar has recourse to the Lord's Incarnations, overlooking the time-lag, for the simple reason that the devotees could mingle with the Lord freely, converse and embrace during His Avatāras, unlike the 'Arca' where such exchanges are not possible, resulting in the Āḷvār's frustration. Even among the Incarnations it is noteworthy that all the Āḷvārs had a partiality for Kṛṣṇa. The illustrious Parāśara Bhaṭṭar explained this special preference, as follows:

The grief caused by one's bereavement loses its intensity with the passage of time, while the pangs are very acute when it is fresh. To the Āḷvārs, Kṛṣṇāvatāra was the nearest in point of time and hence, their lamentations. In the case of Saint Nammāḷvār, in particular, he missed the Kṛṣṇavatāra by a bare six weeks. Tradition has it that he came into this world just forty three days after Lord Kṛṣṇa's ascension to the Celestium. The Āḷvār cursed himself as a sinner, born six weeks late, missing the Kṛṣṇāvatāra like unto a delicious dish hitting the teeth and falling to the ground, while attempting to eat it. It was as if Kṛṣṇa had

acharya.org

left the pastoral township of Tiruvāyppāṭi by the North gate even as the Āḻvār was entering the place by the South gate.

piṟanta āṟum, vaḷarnta ārum, periya pāratam kaiceytu, aivark
tiṟaṅkal kāṭṭiyiṭṭuc ceytu pōṇa māyaṅkaḷum, [kut
niṟam-taṉ ūṭu pukku eṇatu āviyai niṉṟu niṉṟu, urukki uṅkiṉṟa; Ic
ciṟanta vāṉ ouṭarē! uṉṉai eṉṟukol cērvatuvē? (V–10–1)

Translation ;

Oh, Lord of radiance beyond measure, The manner of Your birth,
The manner You grew up, Your wondrous military strategy
In the great battle of Bhārata leading the five to victory,
And Your return to Celestium thereafter, all these, taking one's breath,
Get into the vital region of my heart, sapping my soul
All the time; when indeed will You be joined by this vassal?

Note

After briefly touching upon the Lo-d's Avatāra as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Āḻvār deplores his inability to remain steady and recount His wonderful deeds, as they send him into a trance, touching as they do the inner core of his being. As a matter of fact, even as he contemplated the manner of the Lord's birth as Kṛṣṇa, entering the mother's womb as we, bound souls do, he fell into a trance which lasted six months. This song did not, therefore, progress beyond the opening phrase, ' the manner of Your birth ' (as in the original text), for six motnths. Then again, he was struck by the way Kṛṣṇa grew up, how He was shifted from the place of birth the same night and brought up by a different set of parents, under cover, the odds and ends He had to contend against, right from infancy, the many miracles He wrought in the battle that ensued between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, after His peace-parleys proved abortive, His functioning as Arujuna's charioteer and so on. Briefly put, in the inimitable language of Ītu, the way Kaṇṇaṉ grew up was precisely the way the inimical ones were made to eat the dust and the friendly ones drank deep of His nectarean

acharya.org

charm (a continual feast for their eyes), gobbling up ghee and other milk products stored up in the pastoral township of Tiruvāyppāti (Gokula)

vatuvai vārttaiyuḷ ēṟu pāyntatum, māya māviṉai vāy piḷanta-
matuvai vār kuḷalār kuravai piṇainta kuḷakum, [tum,
atu itu utu eṉṉalāvaṉa alla; eṉṉai uṉ ceykai naivikkum;
mutu vaiya mutalvā! uṉṉai eṉṟu talaippeyvaṉē? (V–10–2)

Translation

Oh, Primate, your wondrous deeds do description baffle
And make me thaw down; pounce you did upon the bulls
When the talk of your wedding (Nappiṉṉai) was on,
The mouth of the treacherous fiend, horse-shaped, you tore open,
Dance you did merrily in the sweet company
Of those damsels whose locks shed plenty of honey,
When can I your lovely feet attain?

Note

The moment the challenging task of taming the seven unruly bulls, all at once, was set up as a pre-condition by the fair Nappiṉṉai's father for winning her hand, Kṛṣṇa dashed forward and pounced upon the animals, killing them all. Again, when Kṛṣṇa was in the company of the Gopīs, a demon in the disguise of a horse came running fiercely to trample upon Him, but, with perfect case, He tore open the longish mouth of the treacherous horse and put an end to it. And then, there was the classical 'Rāsa Krīḍa' in which Kṛṣṇa assumed many forms and stood beside each Gopī, vide detailed notes given earlier about this *wonderful wonder of wonders*. There is hardly any need to single out any one of His many deeds. Each and every one of His deeds sends the Āḷvār into raptures and sweeps him off his feet And so, he prays that he may atleast have the requisite stamina to sustain and steady himself, recount the Lord's glory and revel in it without breaking down.

acharya.org

peyyum pūṅ kuḻal pēy mulai uṇṭa piḷḷait tēṟṟamum, pērntu ōr
ceyya pātam oṉṟāl ceyta niṉ ciṟuc cēvakamum, [cāṭu iṟac
ney uṉ vārttaiyuḷ aṉṉai kōl koḷḷa, nī uṉ tāmaraik kaṇkaḷ nīr
malka,
paiyavē nilaiyum,—vantu eṉ neñcai urukkuṅkaḷē. (V–10–3)

Translation

The innocent looks on Your infant face as You sucked
The devil's breast, the juvenile valour of Your foot red that
kicked
The demon in the wheel, the fright You displayed with tears
In Your lotus eyes, when, before You, Your mother did appear
With stick in hand, to question You about stealing butter,
All these now do I in my mind envision, making it melt down!

Notes

(i) The infant looks of the Babe reveal His innocence, the inability to distinguish between the real mother and the Imposter.

(ii) The Babe had pinching hunger and cried for the mother's breast-milk, casually kicking the cart-wheel. But then, what a mighty kick it was and, that too, just from one foot of the tender Babe! The wheel broke into bits and with it, the demon who had taken possession of it- Juvenile valour indeed!

kaḷḷa vēṭattaik koṇṭu, pōy, puram pukka āṟum, kalantu acu-
uḷḷam pētam ceytiṭṭu, uyir uṇṭa upāyaṅkaḷum, [rarai
veḷḷa nīrc caṭaiyāṉum niṉṉiṭai vēṟualāmai viḷaṅka niṉṟatum,
uḷḷam uḷ-kuṭaintu eṉ uyirai urukki uṇṇumē. (V–10–4)

Translation

The form dubious You assumed (as Buddha) oh Lord!
And entry into the citadels three manoeuvred,
Mingling freely with the Asuras, their outlook You altered
And got them annihilated; (Śiva), with Gangā on matted locks

acharya.org

In close unison with You, I behold and in my mind locked
Are all these, making my soul just melt down

Notes

(i) The Āḷvar characterises the advent of Buddha as a mask put on by Lord Viṣṇu, in order to sow the seeds of doubt, dissension and heresy among the Asuras (who were very powerful, by dint of their rigorous rituals, but most unscrupulous and destructive), with a view to reducing their prowess and strength and getting them annihilated thereby. The story of Buddha, as recorded in the third Aṁśa of Śrī Viṣnu Purāṇa, is as follows

Once upon a time, the Asuras invoked Śiva by their rigorous austerities and when he appeared before them and enquired of them what they wished to have, they asked for three cities, invulnerable to attack from any source. While granting their wish, Śiva warned that the cities should always move in the air without touching each other and if ever they chanced to collide, great misfortune would befall them. The three cities, one made of iron, another of silver and the third of gold, came into existence forthwith Living in these flying citadels, the demons waged war against the Devas and the Brahmins who offered libations to the latter Deprived of the sacrificial offerings from the Brahmins, the strength of the Devas dwindled and they fell an easy prey to the Asuras. When requested by the Devas to destroy the Asuras who posted themselves with their flying citadels at all places where sacrifices were performed, molested and slew the performers, Śiva declined to fell the three, he himself had planted, even if it be poisonous. Thereafter, the Devas went with their tale of woe to Viṣṇu, resting on the Milky ocean and begged of Him to destroy the demons. Queried by the Lord whether the Devas and the Brahmins could not, with their combined might, destroy the demons, the Devas clarified that the Asuras were invincible because they too performed rites and rituals and sacrifices and gained strength, all the time.

acharya.org

Assuring the Devas that He would destroy the demons, the Lord proceeded to the cities of the demons, disguised as an aged Buddha (wise man), carrying a book under his arm and wearing a twisted Kuśā grass round his finger, ring-like. He preached to them morals in a telling manner, and they had no hesitation in adopting Him as their mentor (wise counsellor) When they began performing some Yāga (ceremonies), Buddha accosted them· "What are these sticks for?" Pat came the reply, "For offering into the fire", evoking the observation from Buddha that it was better to be born a grass-eating cow than a stick-eating fire. Likewise, Buddha enquired the purpose for which huge stocks of food had been kept in the venue of the Yāga When He was told that it was all meant to be offered to the Gods, He spoke derisively that it would be nice to do so if they could satisfy the hunger of a traveller by feeding some one at home Buddha asked next why the goats were kept there and elicited the reply that the omentum extracted from the animals would be offered to the Gods. Buddha remarked, "Oh, I see, butchers seem to be the righteous people then!" By means of such preachings, Buddha succeeded in cajoling the demons and with their faith in the sacrifices and their efficacy shaken, they gave them up altogether. They even began to revile Śiva, their great benefactor, and this reached his ears through Buddha. The irate Śiva resolved to destroy the ungrateful demons. In the battle that ensued, the Earth became the chariot, the sun and Moon, its wheels, the four vedas were the horses, Brahmā, the charioteer, Mahā-Meru, the mountain was used as the bow and Ādiśeṣa, the bow-string. Thus equipped, the vile demons were exterminated by Śiva The old order of things was restored whereby the Devas and the Brahmins could live in peace, the latter providing the former with their usual sacrificial offerings.

The authoritative texts (Mahā Bhārata, Karṇa parva) declare 'Viṣṇurātmā Bhagavato bhavasyāmita tejasaḥ' and true to this, Śiva could conquer the demons only through Lord Viṣṇu, his Internal Controller. This is

acharya.org

precisely what the Āḻvār intends to convey when he refers to Śiva standing in close unison with the Lord This Buddha should not, however, be confounded with Śāṅkhya Muni (Gautama), born about 2,500 years ago

(ii) Read also the arguments, Sage Jābāli advanced in Rāmāyaṇa (II-108), to induce Śrī Rāma to get back to the Kingdom, giving up the exile imposed on Him by His father Śrī Rāma had, however, no hesitation in castigating the sage for his specious advice, wide apart from Dharma, about which Śrī Rāma had a very clear conception.

(iii) The accord of Śiva with Viṣṇu, referred to here, denotes the intimate relationship between the two, as Body and Soul respectively, the latter being the 'Antarātmā' or the Inner Soul of the former It is worth recalling, in this connection, the dialogue between Kūratāḻvāṉ and king Kṛmikaṇṭa cōla in the Royal Court. When the king insisted that Kūratāḻvāṉ should subscribe to the bull that Śivā is the Supreme Truth, Āḻvāṉ pointed out, quoting chapter and verse, that Śiva derived all the power he had only from the Paramount Lord of the Cosmos, Viṣṇu. Āḻvāṉ would not sign the order, as commanded by the King and chose to submit himself to the inquisitorial torture of the bigoted king ("Blessed are they that suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" —*Bible*)

uṇṇi vāṉavar-kōṉukku āyar oruppaṭutta aticil untatum,
vaṇṇa māl varaiyai eṭuttu maḻai kāttatum, [māyanka]
maṇṇai muṉ pataittu, uṇṭu, umiḻntu, kaṭantu, iṭantu, maṇanta
eṇṇumtōṟum, eṉ neñcu eiivāy meḻuku okkum niṉṟē. (V–10–5)

Translation

Like wax set on fire, my mind does melt
Whenever I meditate on the Lord's wondrous deeds
How He consumed all the food by the cowherds set
Unto Devas' chief, how He did the rains repel,
Holding the lovely mount aloft, how, in the days of old,

acharya.org

He did the worlds create, ate and spat, spanned and pulled
Them out of the waters deep and did (Mother Earth) wed.

Note

The Āḻvār says that his mind thaws down in contemplation of the Lord's wondrous deeds, those performed for the general weal of the Universe, as well as specially directed towards the amelioration of His ardent devotees.

niṉṟa ārum, irunta ārum, kiṭanta ārum niṉaippu-ariyaṉa;
oṉṟu alā uruvu āy, aruvu āya niṉ māyaṅkaḷ [yēṟku
niṉṟu niṉṟu niṉaikkiṉṟēṉ; uṉṉai eṅṅaṉam niṉaikiṟpaṉ? pāvi-
oṉṟu naṉku uraiyāy, ulakam uṉṭa oṉ cuṭarē! (V–10–6)

Translation

The manner in which You stood in one place, sat in another,
And reposed in yet another, these and several other
Wonders indefinable are indeed beyond my mind's reach,
Ponder do I over them little by little; You, I beseech,
Oh, resplendent Lord, Who the worlds once gulped down,
To grant this sinner, strength to meditate without wearing down

Note

(i) The places where the Lord stood, sat and reposed, not having been specified in this Song, the Ācāryas take delight in interpreting this in a number of ways, as elucidated below:

I Standing

(*Incarnate Forms*)

Śrī Rāma *standing* at the entrance to Laṅka with bow in hand;

The victorious Rāma *standing* with bow in hand after slaying Vāli;

Śrī Kṛṣṇa *standing*, holding mount Govardhan aloft;

Śrī Kṛṣṇa *standing* inside the cradle, holding on to the side-rods;

acharya.org

(*Iconic Form*)

Standing

In Mount *Tiruveṅkaṭam*, *Ūrakam*, *Śrī Vaikuṇṭam* etc.

II. Sitting

(*Incarnate Forms*)

Śrī Rāma *sitting* in *citrakūṭ* and other places, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sitting* in the cradle, unable to stand any longer

(*Transcendent Form*)

Sitting in the High Heavens on the Serpent-Couch

(*Iconic Form*)

Sitting in *Pāṭakaṁ*, *Varakuṇamaṅkai* etc ;

III. Reposing

(i) *Incarnate Forms*

Śrī Rāma, *reposing*, in front of the ocean,

Śrī Kṛṣṇa *reposing* on the laps of the Gopis, just before the commencement of Rāsakrīda;

Śrī Kṛṣṇa reposing in the cradle, as a tender Babe,

(ii) *Vyūha*

The Lord *reposing* in the Milky-ocean, in Yoga Niddhrā,

(iii) *Iconic Form*

Reposing in *Tiruvekkā*, *Puḷiṅkuṭi*, *Tirukkuṭanta*, *Śrīrangaṁ*, *Anantaśayanam* etc.

(ii) Although the Incarnations took place long ago, it should still be possible to meditate on them even at this distance of time. But the wondrous deeds of the Lord are too numerous to be narrated, with any degree of cogency and precision and, in the case of the Āḷvār, he is unable to study himself and recount them without wearing down. And hence, the prayer, as in this song.

acharya.org

(iii) The Lord's wondrous deeds and the different postures assumed by Him at various centres, have been mentioned here by the Āḷvār, only to stress His gracious response to the devotees who give their hearts to Him. It would, therefore, be relevant to cite the following anecdote to illustrate the manner and extent of the Lord's approach to us, when we will but take one step towards Him

A certain devotee, proficient in singing, came all the way to Śrīraṅgam from the far north, longing to worship Lord Raṅganātha When he went to the temple, it was the concluding day of a certain festival. Āḷvār Tiruvaraṅkapperumāl Araiyar, the Temple Bard, chanted a hymn of Tontaraṭippoṭi Āḷvār before Lord Raṅganātha with great feeling and literally coaxed the Lord's pleasure The Lord was highly pleased with His Minstrel and seemed readily inclined to do the latter's bidding At this ripe moment, the Araiyar introduced the devout visitor from the North, who had covered, on foot, more than two thousand miles, and prayed for the Lord's condescension to honour the visitor with a special recognition of his great devotion unto Him The Lord immediately responded by walking four paces of a rod length each (uyyāra natai) in the hands of His holy bearers, from the laurel tree in the cloisters of the temple Addressing the Holy choir, the Lord enquired· "Come, Ye, holy chanters, tell us whether what we have done is adequate to the pains taken by this northern supplicant of ours" Here then is the tradition highlighting the truth that, when man ascends to the God's foot-stool, God descends to the soul of man

oṉ cuṭarōṭu iruḷumāy niṉṟa āṟum, uṇmaiyōṭu iṉmaiyāy vantu, eṉ
kaṇ koḷāvakai nī karantu, eṉṉaic ceykiṉṟaṇa
eṉ koḷ cintaiyuḷ naikiṉṟēṉ; eṉ kariya māṇikkamē! eṉ kaṇkaṭkut
tiṉ koḷḷa oru nāḷ aruḷāy, uṉ tiru-uruvē. (V–10–7)

Translation

My Lord of sapphire hue, with all radiance You shine
In my heart and yet, outside You aren't seen,

acharya.org

And 'tis darkness indeed; 'tween such contradictions torn,
I ponder which is true and which is false and dwindle,
Once in a way let me see Your Form tangible

Note

The Āḻvār prays unto the Lord who has blest him with perpetual light inside, the glorious mental vision of the Divine, to make Himself perceptible to the external senses as well, at least once in a way. The Lord does exist for the devout and sheds light on them while He does not exist so far as the sceptical unbelievers are concerned and non-existence of God is but synonymous with darkness or blindness. For the conflicting individuals these contradictions do exist

tiru-uruvu kitanta āṟum, koppūḻc centāmaraimēl ticaimukaṉ
karuvuḷ vīṟṟiruntu paṭaittitta karumaṅkalum, [niṉṟu nekku,
poru il uṉ taṉi nāyakam avai kētkumtōṟum, eṉ neñcam
aruvi cōrum kaṇṇir, eṉ ceykēṉ atiyēṉē? (V-10-8)

Translation

Your exquisite form in repose (on the Milk-ocean)
The emergence, from the lotus stalk on your navel, of (Brahmā) Ticaimukaṉ,
For the creation of the worlds, pervaded by you as Internal Controller,
All these proclaiming your glory peerless, I hear (the Vedantins utter),
My mind melting down in ecstasy and into torrential tears
Do my eyes break; oh, how can this vassal hold up?

Note

The Āḻvār is simply overwhelmed by the Lord's transcendent glory and, in an unsteady frame of mind charged with great emotion, he is unable to do any sustained thinking clear and cogent.

acharya.org

aṭiyai mūṉṟai iranta āṟum, aṅkē niṉṟu āḷ kaṭalum maṉṉum
muṭiya ir aṭiyāl muṭittukkoṇṭa mukkiyamum, [viṉṉum
noṭiyumāṟu avai kēṭkumtōṟum, eṉ neñcam niṉ-taṉakkē
karaintu ukum;
koṭiya valviṉaiyēṉ-uṉṉai eṉṟukol kūṭuvatē? (V–10–9)

Translation

Your great glory by the devout recounted, I do hear,
How You (from Bali) sought land of three strides,
The unique valour with which You did cover
The Earth, the ocean deep and the Heaven, in two strides
And my mind, in You absorbed, thaws down; sinner heavy
That I am, when will I on You meditate, calm and steady?

kūṭi nīraik kaṭainta āṟum, amutam tēvar uṉṉa, acuraiai
vīṭum vaṉṉaṅkaḷē ceytu pōṉa vittakamum,
ūṭu pukku, eṉatu āviyai urukki uṉṭiṭukiṉṟa; niṉ-taṉṉai
nāṭum vaṉṉam collāy, naccu nāku-Aṉaiyāṉē! (V–10–10)

Translation

Oh, Lord on serpent-bed, the way You churned the Milky ocean,
In conjunction with Devas and Asuras but gave the nectar
To Devas alone, keeping Asuras away, deep into my Soul enters
This scheming wonder of yours and waters it down;
Say how I can Your glory contemplate without breaking down.

Note

The fickle-minded Asuras gave up their bid for the nectar that came from the Milky ocean, when they beheld Lord Viṣṇu's Mohini Avatāra of ravishing feminine charm and ran after the strange Visitor. Contemplating this wonderful sequence of events, the Āḻvār thaws down in wonderment and prays that he should be enabled to meditate on Him with that steadiness with which Ādiśeṣa serves Him. Reference to the Lord's serpent-bed is thus quite significant.

acharya.org

nāku-aṇaimicai nam pirāṉ caraṇē caraṇ namakku eṉṟu nāḷ
ēka cintaiyanāyk kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ māṟaṉ [toṟum
āka nūṟṟa antāti āyirattuḷ ivaiyum ōr pattum vallār
māka vaikuntattu makiḻvu eytuvar vaikalumē (V-10-11)

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten
Out of the thousand composed by Catakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr for his edification, with singular devotion
Unto to the Lord on Serpent-bed, whom he looked upon
As his sole refuge, will enjoy bliss eternal in high heaven

Note

Ādiśeṣa, the Lord's couch *cum* bed will not allow the Lord to give up the supplicants and therefore it is that the Āḻvār seeks to take advantage of this favourable combination.

THE CENTUM, IN RETROSPECT
(DECAD-WISE SUMMARY)

(V-1). The Āḻvār draws the searchlight inward, to discover the root-cause of the extraordinary grace showered on him by the Lord, whereby he could not merely stand apart from the worldlings, without wallowing as one of them but also advise and correct them Finding, however, that, even for a mere show of piety, devoid of genuire love for him, the Lord has condescended to open up the flood-gates of His grace on him, without caring in the least to go beneath the skin and expose his hollowness, the Āḻvār just marvels, *in the opening decad of this Centum*, at the Lord's overwhelming grace and gives vent to his wonderment;

(V-2): The Āḻvār having weaned the people from propitiating minor deities, through his splended exposition of the supremacy of Mahāviṣṇu in IV-10, this abode has now become a land of bliss, hardly distinguishable from Heaven. A golden era has thus been ushered in here, attracting ever the denizens of the upper worlds to this land, to behold and admire this new state of affairs. It is such an exhilarating milieu that the Alvar hails, *in the second decad*, besides envisioning the advent of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Saint Rāmānuja, in the days to come, the veritable destroyers of the ungoldly forces of Kaliyuga;

acharya.org

(V-3): Reverting to the 'Nāyaki' state, which obtained during the three consecutive decads (6 to 8) of the fourth Centum, the Āḻvār is seen, *in the third decad*, all agog to get united with the Lord or at least procure from Him the tuḷaci garland and wear it on her locks. Non-fulfilment of her intense longing, however, induces her to contemplate the drastic step of embarking on what is known as 'Maṭal' in Tamil literature, that is, coming into the open and carrying her tale of woe to the public at large, so that the cruelly unresponsive Lord could be arraigned at the bar of public opinion and the union with Him got accelerated.

(V-4): In order to put through the proceedings, contemplated in the preceding decad, the Nāyakī has to, first of all, draw a sketch of her lover (the accused), for public exhibition But it is pitch dark and she cannot draw the picture. It is an unusually long night, dark and dewy. The whole world is fast asleep and the Nāyakī has no company Against this background, the Nāyakī is seen, *in the fourth decad*, having recourse to the contemplation of the Lord's auspicious traits, soothing her aching heart,

(V-5) *The fifth decad* is sung by the Āḻvār, while still in the feminine state The Sun having risen, at long last, the Nāyakī could enjoy, in her mind's eye, the glorious vision of the Lord, in His Iconic Form at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi (also known as Vaiṣṇava Vāmana Kṣetra). The elders, who tried to bring the Nāyakī round, by admonishing her, are hit back by her, questioning the propriety of their admonishing one whose heart stands rivetted to the exquisite Form of the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi;

(V-6): The gnostic mother finds Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki (Āḻvār), seated like a discourser, with the fingers in an instructional pose and declaring that she had created the whole world, that she would become the world herself and so on Queried by her kinsmen, the bewildered mother says that the Nāyakī is perhaps possessed by the Supreme Lord, who is the Inner Self of all beings. Every song *in the sixth decad* is in two distinct parts, namely, the narration of the Nāyakī's God-vision (Man identified with God), followed by the mother's suggestion that it is perhaps God who has taken possession of the Nāyakī, that speaks through her;

(V-7) The Lord is still keeping Himself away from the Āḻvār, although, on previous occasions, He obliged the Āḻvār with His presence (mental vision of course), whenever the Āḻvār's longing for such communion was far-too-intense. Pondering within himself, the Āḻvār apprehends that the Lord might either want him to adopt other means, such as 'Karma Yoga', 'Jñāna Yoga', and 'Bhakti Yoga or intend to give him up on the ground that he was pursuing other means, instead of looking upon Him as the Sole Means. *In the seventh decad*, the Āḻvār, therefore, hastens to clarify his true stand in this regard, at the feet of the Lord enshrined in Vāṇamāmalai, also known as Cirīvaramaṅkalanakar, deep south in Tamil Nāḍu;

(V-8): In the seventh decad, the Āḻvār fell, like an uprooted tree, at the feet of the Lord enshrined in Vāṇamāmalai and sought refuge and yet, he

acharya.org

was not favoured with the Lord's presence. The Alvar, therefore, turns his attention, *in the eighth decad*, to the Lord gracing Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakōṇam in Tamil Nāḍu), hoping that He might be intending to grant him audience at that centre. The Āḻvār is contemplating, with all the fervour at his command, the enchanting prospect of the Lord casting sweet glances at him, conversing with him and gathering him up to his bosom in sweet embrace The Āḻvār has, however, met with disappointment once again and he ends this decad on a despondent note, exclaiming that he just does not know how many more pilgrim centres he has still to knock at in this manner.

(V-9): *In the ninth decad*, we see a frustrated Āḻvār turning his attention on yet another pilgrim centre, named Tiruvallavāḻ (in Kerala), his coveted union with the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai, not having materialised Even so, he could not get there, being obsessed with the fragrance wafted across from there, the lovely breeze, the musical drone of the bees humming in the orchards over there, the Vedic chantings, etc. Thus stranded, the Āḻvār assumes the state of Nāyakī and apeaks out her infatuation to her mates,

(Of course, it is all mental experience and no physical movement, as such, is involved)

(V-10). *In the concluding decad of this Centum*, the Āḻvār prays unto the Lord to grant him at least the stamina to contemplate His glory and sustain himself, even if He would not oblige him with his company. Having failed to realise his longing for communion with the Lord in His Iconic Form, in successive pilgrim centres, the Alvar turns to the Lord in His incarnate Form, overlooking the time-lag for the simple reason that the devotees could freely mingle with the Lord, during His Incarnations, converse and embrace, unlike the 'Arca' (iconic manifestation), where such exchanges are not possible. Even among the Lord's many incarnations, the Āḻvār has a partiality for the proximate Kṛṣṇāvatār, the manner in which He was born and the way He grew up, touching the inner core of his being and sending him unto a trance.

---

acharya.org

ERRATA (Vol. II)

PAGE	LINE	
194	8	(From bottom) *For* into *read as* unto.
195	2	Insert — before ' too '.
196	24	*For* in as much *read as* inasmuch.
,,	2	(From bottom) *For* him *read as* Him.
197	20	Delete " after ' said ' and insert " before ' oh '.
,,	21	*For* Kovindā *read as* Govindā.
202	13	*For* Intirā *read as* Indrā.
206	16	*For* wholesome *read as* unwholesome.
207	13	Delete , after ' had '.
,,	4	(From bottom) *For* has *read as* have.
215	9	*For* Thence forward *read as* Thenceforward.
,,	18	Insert , before ' first '.
216	6	Insert , after ' forms '
219	8	*For* into *read as* unto.
232	7	(From bottom) *For* th *read as* the.
235	2	(From bottom) *For* trails *read as* traits.
241	8	Insert " after ' one ' and delete " before ' So '.
252	6	*For* He *read as* he.
254	3	*For* then *read as* than.
256	7	Substitute , for , before ' our '.
272	6	(From bottom) insert , after ' hearts '
277	20	Substitute , for full-stop after ' dead '.
,,	22	Insert , before ' the '.
281	13	*For* Vāekamālai *read as* Vācakamālai
282	8	Insert , before ' in ' and ' those '.
286	4	*For* glorlying *read as* glorifying.
287	20	Insert , after 'Earth '.
288	26	Insert , after ' Him '.
289	6	(From bottom) *For* promises *read as* praises.
292	18	*For* favourable *read as* favourably.
,,	20	*For* heavely *read as* heavenly.
295	13	(From bottom) insert , before ' carrying '.
296	5	(From bottom) *For* Stains *read as* Stain.
303	5	(From bottom) *For* fatigues *read as* fatigue.
305	8	(From bottom) insert , before ' out ' and after ' love '.
308	9	Insert , after ' Lord '.
,,	Last	*For* of *read as* by.
309	7	Insert , after ' from '.
310	20	*For* past *read as* part.
311	6	Insert , after ' Lord '.
313	2	Insert , after ' Lord '.
,,	3	Insert , before ' is '.
314	1	*For* them *read as* then.
,,	19	Insert , before ' thence '.

acharya.org

PAGE	LINE	
314	10	(From bottom) insert , before ' land ' and ' pleasures '.
315	4	Substitute , for ; before ' viṭu '
,,	10	(From bottom) insert , after desires '
,,	,,	(From bottom) insert , ' a ' after ' in '
316	9	(From bottom) *For* Eḷ *read as* ēḷ.
317	5	(From bottom) insert , after 'young '
319	11	(From bottom) *For* cove *read as* covet
321	8	(From bottom) insert , after ' bedecked '.
,,	8	(From bottom) delete , before ' bedecked ' and ' the '
323	13	(From bottom) insert , before ' through '
326	5	*For* eṉaṭutaiya *read as* eṉatuṭaiya
330	4	(From bottom) *For* Āḻver *read as* Āḻvār
338	6	Delete the bracket
344	10	*For* viṉaiyal *read as* viṉaiyāl
345	4	(From bottom) *For* facts *read as* facets
347	4	*For* lakṣmī *read as* Lakṣmī
,,	8	Insert , before ' full ' and 'just '
349	3	(From bottom) insert , after ' benefits ' and ' Lord '
352	17	(From bottom) insert , before ' in ' and after ' manner '.
,,	16	(From bottom) insert — at the end
354	12	*For* fact *read as* face
362	Last	Insert — at the end
365	12	(From bottom) insert , after ' jute '
368	14	*For* And *read as* and
371	10	(From bottom) insert , after ' around '
,,	8	(From bottom) insert , after 'is '
372	22	Insert full-stop before ' when '
,,	,,	*For* when *read as* When
373		Insert between lines 29 and 30 ' Enjoy you, perfect knowledge personified, done with '
374	9	(From bottom) *For* stills *read as* still
375	10	(From bottom) insert , after ' discus '
,,	9	(From bottom) insert — after ' red '
377	12	(From bottom) *For* inders *read as* hinders
381	13	Insert , before ' moving '.
382	11	Insert , after ' waist '
383	6	*For* wetted *read as* rivetted
,,	6	(From bottom) insert " after ' it? '.
387	9	*For* Himsel *read as* Himself
,,	3	(From bottom) *For* sense *read as* senses
391	4	*For* exist *read as* exit.
394	7	(From bottom) *For* stomaches *read as* stomachs
396	4	Insert , after ' fortress '.
400	11	(From bottom) insert , after ' so '
,,	Last	*For* Āḻippirāṉ *read as* Ātippirāṉ
402	7	(From bottom) *For* teyvum *read as* teyvam.

acharya.org

PAGE	LINE	
403	5	Insert , after ' Lord '.
,,.	6	Insert , after ' worlds '.
407	20	Insert ' the ' after ' am '.
408	11	Insert , after ' down '.
409	7	(From bottom) insert ' was ' after ' he '.
411	4	*For* Āḻippirāṉ *read as* Ātippirāṉ.
412	2	(From bottom)—*For* indee *read as* indeed.
413	9	*For* away *read as* sway.
,,	15	Insert , after ' aspiration '.
414	5	Insert, before ' that ' and ' of '.
422	7	(From bottom) *For* aktē *read as* aḵtē.
426	14	*For* turnout *read as* turn out.
428	13	(From bottom) insert , after ' Lord ' and before 'have '.
429	13	(From bottom) delete ' by '
436	Last	Insert , before ' He '.
437	15	Insert , before ' on '
441	8	*For* corn *read as* born
,,	12	Insert , after ' throne '
,,	19	Insert , after ' is '.
,,	5	(From bottom) *For* ir *read as* in
443	20	Insert , before ' as '
451	17	*For* eṅṅaṉēyō *read as* eṅkaṉēyō.
452	7	*For* Eṅṅaṉēyō *read as* Eṅkaṉēyō.
,,	10	(From bottom) insert , after ' miseries '
454	3	(From bottom) insert , after ' elders '
456	13	Delete ' meet ' after ' it ' and insert ' meet ' after ' be '.
459	Last	Insert , before ' in '.
460	18	Substitute ' or ' for ' of ' after ' fragrance '.
474	1	Insert , after ' Lord '
488	14	Delete , after ' and '.
489	12	(From bottom) *For* whetheF *read as* whether.
490	9	*For* fathered *read as* gathered.
,,	12	(From bottom) insert , after ' gems and ' Tirukkuṭantai '.
492	13	(From bottom) delete ' in '.
493	14	(From bottom) substitute full-stop for , at the end.
495	9	(From bottom) *For* fall *read as* full.
,,	8	(From bottom) insert, before ' all ' and 'cool '.
497	5	*For* feel *read as* feet.
498	3	*For* Heavn *read as* Heaven.
,,	[illegible]	*For* [illegible] *read as* centres.
,,	11	insert , before ' than '.
499	14	*For* worksh[illegible]ble *read as* worshippable.
50[illegible]	11	(From bottom) *For* motnths *read as* months.
5[illegible]	[illegible]	(From bottom) *For* three *read as* tree.
5[illegible]	2	(From bottom) *For* study *read as* steady.
51[illegible]	9	Delete ' to '.

TIRUPATI

acharya.org